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ABSTRACT

The Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) has been in operation in Oxford, England for 5 years, with the aim of raising educational attainment, especially in literacy, by an entire community of children from their birth. This book recounts how PEEP started and its operation over the 5 years, focusing on the impact of the program and the opportunities and challenges inherent in working to support families with young children from birth to school. The book's introduction describes the project as a whole. Chapter 1, "Getting Started, Keeping Going," describes how the project began, how the program was developed, and some of the policy discussions and decisions providing the underpinning for PEEP. Chapter 2, "Families," examines recruitment practices. Chapter 3, "Doing PEEP," describes program operation and the development of PEEP's principles and values. Chapter 4, "Things PEEP Needed," concerns resources used in groups and at home, the facilities, and finances and funding. Chapter 5, "People," discusses issues related to staff recruitment, management, and training and development for staff, parents, and caregivers. Chapter 6, "Collaboration," concerns how PEEP worked with other providers. Chapter 7, "Collecting Evidence," addresses issues related to monitoring and evaluation. Chapter 8, "What People Have Said," presents responses about the program from parents, staff, and other providers showing how the program has affected participants so far. Chapter 9, "What Have We Learned?" examines the aspects of the program that have gone well and challenging issues that generate resolutions for PEEP in Phase 2 of the program. (Contains a 91-item bibliography.) (KB)

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PEEP Voices

a five year diary

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Supporting early learning at home

PEEP Voices

a five year diary

Supporting early learning at home

1995 – 2000

Edited by Rosemary Roberts

Published by Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP)
Registered Charity Number 1049764

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'Getting Started, Keeping Going' describes how the project began, how the programme was developed, and some of the policy discussions and decisions that have provided the underpinning for PEEP.

Chapter 2: Families 40

'Families' looks at the first, vital process of doing PEEP: recruitment. What does it take to find – and to keep – the families?

Chapter 3: Doing PEEP 50

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Chapter 4: Things PEEP Needed 70

'Things PEEP Needed' is the chapter about resources for an early literacy programme. The first part of the chapter, 4A, is about the resources used in groups and at home, especially books, play-packs and good quality scrap; and about essential systems and equipment. The second section, 4B, is about premises. And last but not least, 4C is about the finance and funding.

Chapter 5: People *88*

'People' has also been divided, this time into two sections. 5A is about staff recruitment and management, and 5B looks at training and development for staff, parents and carers .

Chapter 6: Collaboration *106*

'Collaboration' is about how PEEP worked with other providers, aiming to make the most of the potential for mutual support. This was a particularly active element of PEEP in 1998 – 1999 when the opportunity arose to help set up Rose Hill-Littlemore Sure Start.

Chapter 7: Collecting Evidence *114*

'Collecting Evidence' is about the various aspects of monitoring and evaluation that have been a crucial part of the development of PEEP. It also refers to the studies that are beginning to provide evidence about whether PEEP makes a difference, and in what ways. What people have said is contained in chapter 8.

Chapter 8: What people have said *122*

'What people have said' is a selection of responses about PEEP from parents, staff and other providers. These responses show some early results, indicating the ways in which PEEP has affected people so far, although ultimately the research studies will provide more robust comparative data. 'What people have said' also refers to the times when PEEP staff have presented the project to local and national audiences.

Chapter 9: What have we learned? *146*

'What have we learned?' starts by looking at what seems to have worked well. These are things for PEEP to continue to develop. A very great deal has been learned from three challenging issues which occupy the main content of this chapter, and which generate 'resolutions' for PEEP in Phase Two.

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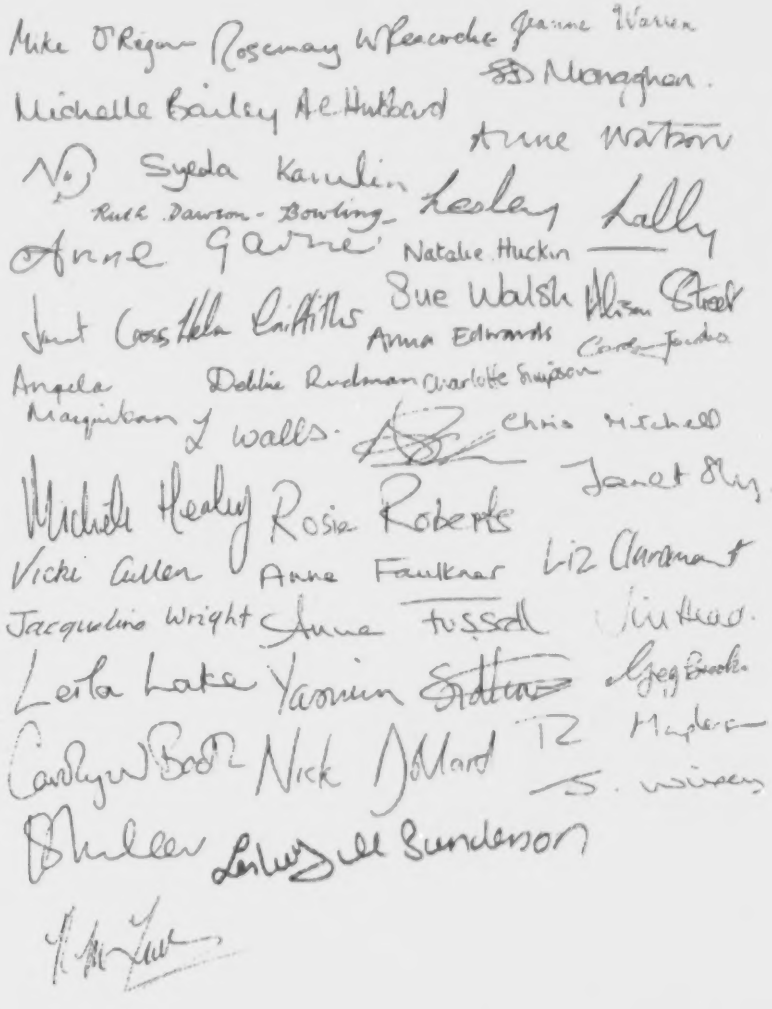
Preface

'Memory Lane' was the name of the celebratory day in July 2000 when many of the people who had been involved in PEEP gathered together to look back at the development of the project. The memories that were collected on that day made the starting point for this book, and many people have added to it since. 'PEEP Voices' is not intended as a comprehensive record of the project's development (for this, there have been Annual Reports which can be found on PEEP's website at www.peep.org.uk). Rather, it is a record of the events and feelings that made the most impact on the people who worked to set up PEEP and who contributed to the book. These memories have been collected into the first eight chapters, with the addition by the editor of an introduction and a final chapter. Below are the signatures of contributors to the text.

The editor would like to acknowledge that 'PEEP Voices' also owes its existence to the work of two particular staff members: at the start of the process by Leila Lake, and in the final stages by Lucinda Coventry.



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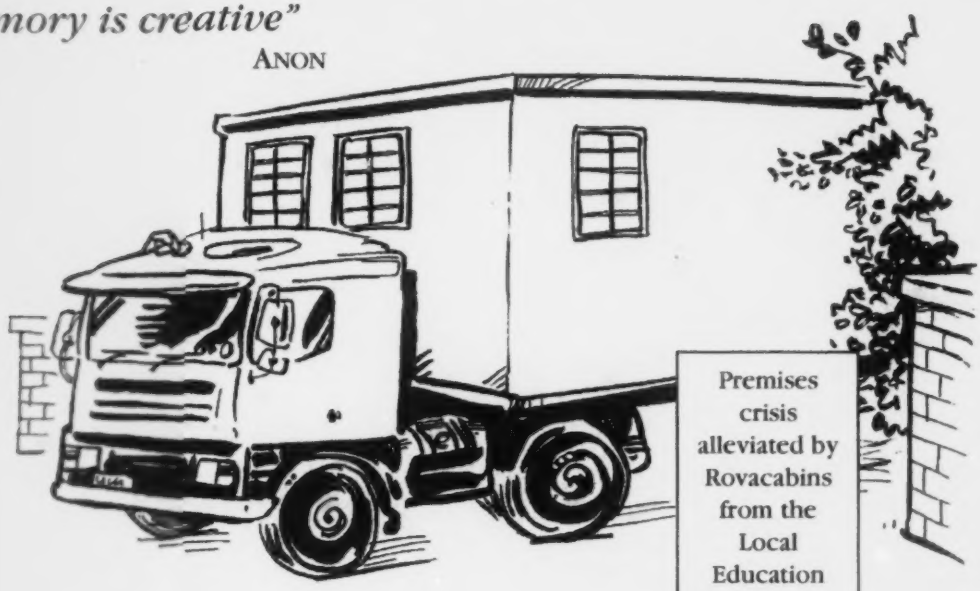
Introduction

'Looking Back' is about the purpose of collecting these memories of the PEEP project so far, and how they have been shaped. It looks at some of the aims and achievements, disasters and challenges since 1995, and includes a short account of the project as as whole.

Original PEEP Centre, in a spare classroom at Windale First School
Five-year series of guidelines completed: for Babies, Ones, Twos and Threes, Fours
peep
Babies Talking
The PEEP Tent
First two groups, for babies, and for three year-olds

Looking back

"Memory is creative"
ANON



Premises crisis alleviated by Rovacabins from the Local Education Authority - arriving by lorry

The fire in the Centre

The First Certificate Fair

PEEP Link development, using 'Learning Together' publications for five levels

Introduction: Looking back

The purpose of 'PEEP Voices'

This document was originally intended as an internal one, both by and for PEEP staff. As we came to the end of Phase One of the project (1995 – 2000) the aim was to reflect the overall development of PEEP. Staff have often felt somewhat isolated in their own particular area of work, and said that they would like to know more about what has been happening in other areas. We needed a document in which each person would be able to see how their own efforts and achievements have fitted into the whole, so that we can share a sense of achievement as we go forward into Phase Two (2000 – 2005).

As soon as we began to look back – and realising how essentially creative memory is – we saw that the things we remembered most frequently were the difficult and painful times, together with how we had managed those episodes. We had made so many mistakes and learned so much that we found ourselves documenting what we had learned as well as what we had done.

The possibility therefore arose that the document might be of interest outside the project itself, particularly to others embarking on related work who are likely to encounter similar challenges. Also we realise that with the passage of time there is increasing interest in what we can say about outcomes of PEEP. Although we have to wait for the report of the Birth to School Study to give us really reliable information about what differences PEEP makes, we have by now accumulated a great deal of qualitative, anecdotal evidence, as well as all of our own monitoring information. For both of these reasons it seems appropriate to make the document more widely available. At the same time, much of the informality of it has been retained, reflecting its original main purpose.

What is PEEP?

Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) was set up in 1995. It is an early learning intervention which aims to improve the life chances of children in disadvantaged areas. Its purpose is to raise educational attainment, especially literacy, by supporting parents and carers in their role as first educators, giving their children a flying start at school.

Research studies have shown that early childhood programmes are more likely to succeed where there is effective parental involvement - the idea of parent-professional partnership based on mutual respect

and a shared purpose. PEEP has built on these findings to develop a unique five-year programme of support for parents and carers for the period from a child's birth to school entry: an affordable, transferable model designed to support all families with young children in disadvantaged communities, complementing pre-school and school provision. Associated benefits relate to social inclusion and to parents' own confidence, basic skills and life long learning.

The project is currently located in a peripheral estate of Oxford (Blackbird Leys and surrounding areas, with 2000 children under five years). From birth to school it offers materials, group sessions (currently over thirty in the area each week) and home visits to parents and carers. The focus is on listening, talking, playing and singing together, and sharing books every day, aiming to lay solid foundations for later learning, especially literacy.

Parents are offered the Open College Network award which helps them to make the most of PEEP and builds confidence to access other courses and to plan for returning to work, especially as their children enter school. 277 OCN certificates have been awarded to PEEP parents and carers since the system started in 1997. PEEP Learning Bridge is a satellite project in Community Education which develops courses and ensures that parents are offered appropriate information and support when they need it. A Higher Education 'PEEP Leader Certificate' is currently being developed with the Westminster Institute at Oxford Brookes University. This will represent a route into Higher Education for a range of people including local parents and carers with an interest in training to work with the youngest children in care and education.

PEEP works with adults, about children's learning. New publications from PEEP – packs for Learning Together with Babies, Ones, Twos, Threes and Fours – will be available in January 2001, together with accompanying training for people working to support families with babies and young children. The project was involved in helping to set up one of the government's new Sure Start programmes, Rose Hill-Littlemore Sure Start, and now works within it, concentrating currently on developing strategies for reaching and working with the most vulnerable families.

Current, PEEP's quality framework has nine areas:

1 **Why do PEEP?**
The aim is to raise educational attainment, especially literacy.
2 **Who is it for?**
PEEP is not targeted, but available to all families in a defined geographical area; and all parents and carers are free to access the

project or decline it. The work is based on consistently respectful, careful, detailed attention to the needs of all children and families in the defined area.

3 What is PEEP?
The PEEP programme is documented in publications available to all families and service providers in the area, focusing on children's early literacy development supported through interaction and play taking place in homes, groups and pre-school settings.

4 How is PEEP evaluated?
Systematic internal monitoring and evaluation; comparative studies; and a Programme Implementation Profile in process of development.

5 How it works – values
PEEP focus on equal opportunities, unconditional acceptance and self-esteem and learning dispositions

6 How it works – staff
Quality of staff is crucial, reflected in careful recruitment and induction, training and on-going development. There is a clear supervision and support structure for all staff, and a PEEP (H.E.) Certificate is being developed for PEEP Leaders. The project aims for consistent staff professionalism (objectivity, confidentiality, reliability, efficiency).

7 How it works – reflective learning dispositions
There is an emphasis on positive learning dispositions and a reflective learning culture throughout the project, incorporating children, parents and staff. PEEP's policy is to offer information and ideas, and to clarify reasons for doing so, avoiding a culture of dependence.

8 How it works – resources
PEEP offers good quality literacy resources to families: books, play packs and scrap.

9 How it works – collaboration
The project collaborates as far as possible with other service providers in the area, aiming to retain its focus while at the same time providing a support network enabling families to access a range of other services and support that they may need at various times.

The Home Office has recently made a two-year grant to fund national development by dissemination and replication. Sure Start programmes, Bookstart projects and others may wish to consider accessing PEEP publications and training to augment their work. Foundation PEEP (for 3s and 4s) has been developed to offer support in a range of pre-school settings as well as in PEEP groups and at home.

Does PEEP make a difference? There is a growing body of anecdotal qualitative evidence showing that it positively impacts both on babies' and young children's development, and on their parents' and carers' role as first educators. The PEEP Research Consortium, chaired by Professor Kathy Sylva, co-ordinates all studies of PEEP. In order to ensure an objective account of the programme and quantitative evidence of outcomes, two studies have been set up. A 'Birth to School' study, developed at The National Foundation for Educational Research (NFER) and directed by Dr. Greg Brookes, began in 1998 and will report finally in 2005. Another study, of PEEP for Threes and Fours (Foundation PEEP), developed in the Oxford University Department for Educational Studies and directed by Professor Kathy Sylva, will report its early findings shortly. Both are comparative studies funded the DfEE.

The purpose of the first phase of PEEP (1995 – 2000) was to develop and pilot a new way of working with parents and carers of children from birth to school, to raise educational attainment, especially literacy. The second phase of PEEP (2000 – 2005) aims to continue the process of developing and researching this new way of raising literacy levels in the long term, with the added dimension of working with Sure Start. As well as disseminating widely, it also aims to test replication of PEEP in another Sure Start area.

Whether PEEP continues into a third phase beyond 2005 will depend initially on funding. The project now needs core funding for 2003 onwards, in order to continue developing the programme in its original area. This process of development generates the training and support programmes for children and families in other areas. Continuation into a third phase will also depend on the success of dissemination and replication from now on, and on research outcomes.

PEEP's 'vision' is to contribute to the development of a government policy for supporting 0 – 3s and families which includes putting in place a new 'building block' at the base of the education system. By working with the parents and carers who live and work with the very youngest children from birth to school, this building block would constitute vital support at the very earliest foundation stage of

children's learning; additionally contributing to their mental health and life chances.

Overview of Phase One

The context for the overview of Phase One that follows is PEEP's two aims for Phase One, as set out above. These aims have been the 'frame' for everything that has been developed in PEEP since 1995.
As we began the process of looking back, the picture was rather blurred. Events have flashed past like the backdrop of the roller-coaster as one clings on. Looking back, the pressure to get things done and the rapid rate of development and change have been by turns exhilarating, harassing, fascinating, overwhelming. A more reflective look at each succeeding year reveals the following sequence of events:

In 1995: Basic decisions about the aims, curriculum, pedagogy and evaluation of the project. Also plans, management structures and reporting mechanisms. One whole year of doing absolutely everything for the first time, and needing to make everything up. Could not have begun at all without a) funding – the Hamilton Trust and the Single Regeneration Budget – and b) ethics permission from NAPREC (Nursing and Allied Professions Research Ethics Committee).

In 1996: Managing enormous expansion of numbers of families, at the same time as responding to serious evaluation questions about what we were doing and how we were relating to families: a stressful balancing act.

In 1997: Putting much-needed systems in place to manage the greatly expanded numbers of families and staff. A time of internal review, consolidation, and new management structures.

In 1998: Surviving the catastrophic fire in the PEEP Centre and keeping going in the aftermath. Beginning to attract a national profile.

In 1999: Ensuring completion of Phase One objectives, including the new publications; and development of PEEP Link, a way of offering those publications for use at home to all the families who do not come to groups. Current (and planned) scope of project generating human resources management issues, as well as frustrating premises problems. Leading the application and early development of Rose Hill-Littlemore Sure Start – an opportunity to extend the ways in which PEEP can work, and also important in relation to PEEP's identity locally and nationally.

In 2000: Completing Phase One, managing the transition from Phase One to Phase Two, and planning for the future.

The ups ... and the downs

The change of government in 1997 brought a change of emphasis in relation to integration of services, especially in health and education. For voluntary sector providers of services who are also seeking integration this has been a very positive shift. But although the government's determination to support *new* initiatives in education and other related services has been enormously helpful, the inadequate resources and ever-increasing pressure on schools and early education settings has made their genuine collaboration in working with parents more and more difficult to achieve without the financial flexibility which would enable them to allocate even a minimum of staff time for this work.

A positive aspect of PEEP's Phase One has been the way in which funding has been offered to the project, sometimes with an initial approach from a funder who has heard about the work and would like to support it. PEEP has benefited immeasurably from having a financial 'safety-net' provided by one of the 'founding' trustees which – unusually for a project of this size – has made the possibility of long-term planning a reality. In 1995 there was an intention to run the project for five years but only sufficient funding committed for two. Although the shortfall for Phase One has now been secured from a variety of sources we are, at the outset of Phase Two, in much the same place as we were at this stage of Phase One. Perhaps it is not too optimistic to hope that we will continue to find solutions this time around.

Challenges, issues, problems and disasters

To conclude this introduction, an honest account of this first phase of PEEP has to feature the major challenges, issues, problems and outright disasters that were encountered. There are – possibly with the exception of the fire – perhaps five from which we have learned and continue to learn the most. The first was about getting the groups going, followed by responding to the evaluation report in 1996. Of course there was how to survive the fire and its aftermath. And there has been how to understand and make the most of the context of mounting external opportunities and pressures from initiatives beyond our control, especially on schools and pre-schools. These included OFSTED, Desirable Learning Outcomes, National Literacy Strategy, Sure Start, the Education Action Zone, Early Learning Goals and the new Foundation Stage. And lastly and most persistent and important of all, the question that other practitioners wrestle with on their own account and that everyone asks about. This is the struggle to solve the

'hard-to-reach-families' problem – or rather, the 'families-we-are-failing-to-reach' problem.

Interim outcomes

Chapter 8, 'What People Have Said', contains interim outcomes information, from families, colleagues and PEEP staff. Whilst all the voices in this very optimistic chapter are absolutely genuine, we feel we should stress that rigorous evidence of how a project such as PEEP is making a difference can only be identified as a result of comparative studies. In PEEP's case, the first such results will come from the study of PEEP for Threes, reporting in the summer of 2001, while the 'Birth to School' study collects data annually and will report finally in 2005.

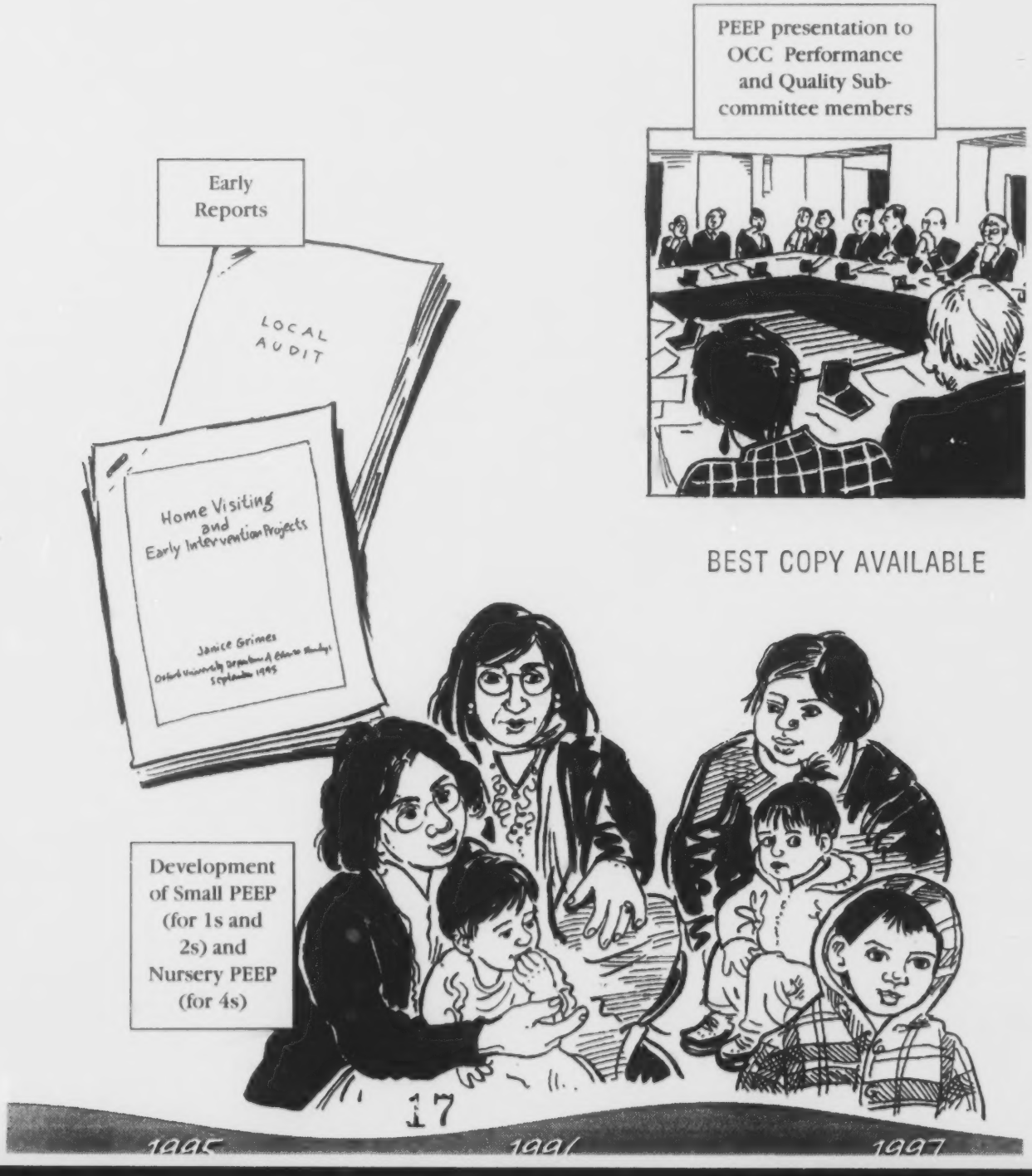
Finding your way around

Each chapter reflects a particular area of the project, and starts with a few key illustrated events in that area since the project actively began in 1995. Then you will find the voices of various people all of whom have been connected with the project in some way: as families, as staff or volunteers, or as others – involved in PEEP but neither families nor staff. **The key is F for families, S for staff or volunteers, and O for others.** Some people have written from a combined perspective of family *and* staff. At the end of each chapter is a diary of some of the developments – by no means comprehensive but giving a sense of the general flow of events.

So the first chapter, 'Getting Started', is where it all began; with Michael O'Regan's personal perspective on the development of PEEP, and his memories of early planning; and there are many other voices to tell the story. Although the theme of 'What have we learned?' runs through the memories it is seldom made explicit, so that readers can draw conclusions from their own perspectives. It is, however, the main focus of Chapter 9, which also includes a very brief look at the plans for PEEP in Phase Two – and even Phase Three if that should happen.

Chapter 1

'Getting Started, Keeping Going' describes how the project began, how the programme was developed, and some of the policy discussions and decisions that have provided the underpinning for PEEP.


PEEP presentation to OCC Performance and Quality Sub-committee members
Early Reports
LOCAL AUDIT
Home Visiting and Early Intervention Projects
Janice Grimes
September 1995
Development of Small PEEP (for 1s and 2s) and Nursery PEEP (for 4s)
1995
1997

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7

Getting started – Keeping going

"We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time."

T.S. ELIOT

PEEP as accountable body for Rose Hill-Littlemore Sure Start

House of Commons Select Committee visit

peep Learning Bridge

'Learning Bridge' provided further opportunities for parents

1998 1999 2000

Chapter 1: Getting started, keeping going

Starting with Michael O'Regan's memories of PEEP's beginnings

How it all started – a personal perspective

The defining act leading to the later creation of PEEP was the enthusiastic support given by Tim Brighouse, then Chief Education Officer of Oxfordshire, to my tentative question over breakfast coffee. The meeting was at 7am I think, that being the only time that Tim's diary could accommodate my request for a meeting. He had recently announced his forthcoming departure to become Professor of Education at Keele University (this was in 1989), and his response to my asking 'Would an early years parent-focused project be a good idea?' was an emphatic 'Yes', followed by 'It's the only thing I regret not having done before leaving Oxfordshire'.

Not only did Tim, whether he knew it or not, give PEEP – previously only a somewhat uncertain concept – the green light, but he also almost gave it its name. He was able to tell me of a few pre-school projects around the world, including the Brookline Early Education Project (BEEP). As I had envisaged initiating such a project in the Blackbird Leys area of Oxford, it was only one or two days before I had christened it in my mind as BLEEP. Only after the later contributions of Bernard Clarke, headteacher of Peers School, did the project change its name to PEEP, the Peers Early Education Partnership. (The change of the last letter 'P' to Partnership was initially a bit of opportunism to catch the new desirability – matched by increased funding potential – for partnerships. But, less cynically, even as we changed the Project to Partnership we embraced the 'partnership' word as supporting our intended approach of being true partners with parents, and also with schools, agencies and other organisations.)

From that day on, I knew I intended some day, when I had more time and money, to start such a project and my BLEEP box file started to fill up over the years, slowly at first, but at a quickening pace from 1992 onwards. That year I had moved to being a non-executive director at Research Machines, where I had previously worked full-time since its founding in 1973, which gave me the time I wanted to follow

up such enthusiasms as PEEP. And in 1992, one person's initial concept had become a concept shared by a number of committed and enthusiastic individuals. Notable among PEEP's progenitors were Bernard Clarke, Donald McIntyre (then Reader at Oxford University Department of Educational Studies (OUDES)), Pat Moss (Joint Director of the Centre for Parent-Teacher Partnership) and Jill Head (Link LEA Adviser with the Blackbird Leys Schools).

We also had the support and credibility given by several high-powered academics and educationalists from whom I had been able to gather advice over the years, such as Teresa Smith (at, and now Director of, Oxford's Department of Applied Social Studies), Kathy Sylva (now a Professor at OUDES) and Sir Christopher Ball (then making national waves with his and Kathy's RSA-sponsored 'Start Right'). Although these and other advisers and friends contributed ideas for the content of such an intervention, it would have to wait several years before Rosie Roberts and her team developed what PEEP would actually do, what it would be. But at least it had become clear that PEEP would happen, in some form or other.

The personal reasons and logic that had led me to seek that meeting with Tim Brighouse, and to continue to develop the concept in the years since, seemed then, as now, very commonplace – but still powerful enough to commit me to action. They were a personal and idiosyncratic mixture and I remember them as follows.

First, as background, my father, and his father (and his father) had all been committed teachers and educators. I too had taught for a total of three years. Although I had always known that I didn't want to teach as a career, I greatly enjoyed those years and a belief in the importance of education is definitely in my blood (or is it my genes?).

Secondly, my last two years of teaching, at an effective school for underachievers – defined as those whose current attainments were considered to be particularly distant from their potential – showed me the huge potential of every individual, if only the conditions and appropriate support could be provided.

Thirdly, I remembered from university days the headline of a finding by a Professor Blom. (I always knew that I had possibly mis-remembered his research, and as I had read Economics I can't be sure how his work ever reached me – but its impact on me was no less powerful because of these uncertainties.) It was along these lines: half of mature intelligence has been reached/achieved/developed by the age of four. I didn't need to know the finding more precisely: the main conclusion I drew was not in doubt – that the pre-school years are very very important in the educational development of a child and the later achievements of that individual.

Fourthly, I seemed to have evidence at home of the importance these early years. My wife Jane spent a great deal of time with our daughter Hannah before she was five: reading with her, counting, sorting, playing with a purpose, and above all talking, talking more, and reading again. And Jane was no educationalist and indeed needed reassurance that it was all right to be doing what she was doing, even if it occasionally seemed that professionals would be unsupporting of Jane's amateur efforts. We both feel that Jane, a non-professional parent, had succeeded in giving Hannah a flying start by the time she reached school.

Finally, I had become a governor of Peers School which served the majority of thirteen – eighteen-year-olds on Blackbird Leys, Littlemore and Rose Hill. I was very impressed by the school – by the excellent leadership of its headteachers, Bob Moon and then Bernard Clarke, by the quality and number of the initiatives that Peers had originated, and above all by the commitment and hard work of the staff. Yet, from my limited direct involvement with some of the students, and from my knowledge of the different exam results, I was surprised and shocked. I couldn't see how Peers could do any better for its students; it was running flat out, with skill and commitment, yet the economy – and above all the students – would need higher skills and educational attainments.

I initially thought it must be the fault of the Middle Schools, but another defining moment, prompting me to look elsewhere, was provided by Paul Reast, headteacher of Wesley Green Middle School, at a meeting of a temporary grouping called the Blackbird Leys Forum. Paul was advancing the importance of education in a discussion about the relatively high level of criminal activity by children in their early teens. 'When I hauled into my room two nine-year-olds, who'd been breaking windows, they explained how they felt: they couldn't read and school no longer meant anything to them. They really wished they could read. Things would be different then. But they knew it was too late for them now.'

Did the opportunity for improvement lie, I wondered, with the First Schools (five – nine)? If only the children left the schools able to read they wouldn't be breaking Middle School windows. But I was impressed when I met a couple of First School headteachers. They too seemed to be working at the limit of what could be expected and against large odds. They did allow themselves that 'It was very difficult to start with the children who came to them aged four and five, not obviously ready to learn, unused to socialising or to sitting quietly in a chair, new to books and to the pleasures of reading. Their parents clearly loved them but money, and possibly stable relationships at

home, were sometimes lacking. Education was not valued and many parents had had poor experience of school; they would not expect much different for their children'.

If parents had not been particularly interested in their children's education, then it would have been difficult to maintain any project about parental involvement. Here, the evidence from Ruth Merttens' IMPACT project was most encouraging. Her programme was about parents (usually mothers) sharing specially devised maths homework with their young children. Contrary to what I would have guessed, the degree of sustained parental involvement, which was high, was independent of socio-economic grouping. It did rise and fall according to the age of the child, but not according to class or mother's education. Our later extended interviews with nineteen mothers in the project area confirmed their great desire to help with their pre-school children's development, including their going along to meetings. The parents wanted information and in many cases lacked confidence – but their wish to know and do more to help their children's education made a project such as PEEP viable.

Out of all these strands came my perception of the need and of the opportunity for an early years project, for all the children in an Oxford community, from their birth, and focusing on working with parents. The project would be local, but its relevance and later impact might also be national. And although it had always seemed to me a matter of common sense, the idea became a plan over the coffee and croissants, when it received that firm and most educationally credible endorsement.

Early Planning for PEEP

Preparations for the creation of PEEP began in earnest in 1993. The firm intention to start such an early years parent-focused initiative had been crystallised in 1989. But I didn't have the time to progress the idea, except on an occasional basis, until late 1992. Nor would Hamilton Trust, the educational charity I had set up and funded in 1988, have sufficient liquid funds to underwrite a PEEP project start until December 1994.

The years to 1993 continued with a gathering of input from a number of sources and there were also some publications and papers of particular relevance and persuasiveness. The ones on a national stage that I remember were: a TES/Greenwich Lecture, entitled 'An Equal Start for all our Children?', by Gillian Pugh (then Director of the Early Childhood Unit of The National Children's Bureau); 'Learning Before School', a paper by Kathy Sylva and Peter Moss (both then of The Institute of Education, University of London) for the National

Commission on Education; Sir Christopher Ball's 'Starting Right' as part of the RSA's Start Right enquiry which he and Kathy Sylva co-directed; and Kathy Sylva's review, 'The Impact of Early Learning on Children's Later Development', for the same enquiry.

Locally, there was the Oxfordshire LEA Early Years Team's conference on Babies, Toddlers and Young Children (0-3) – Playing and Learning; and meetings with Teresa Smith, Sue Hale (Oxfordshire Early Years Team), Jill Head, Ruth Merttens (Director of IMPACT), Sylvia Karavis (from Oxfordshire's PAGE team) and others. And by this time I had had discussions with Bernard Clarke, headteacher of Peers School, who also saw the need for such an intervention for children in and around Blackbird Leys, the majority of whom would come to Peers as their secondary school. He and I formed the core of the team which was to push the project forward.

In 1993 there were two forums which acted as a catalyst for the quickening of the development of the PEEP concept. One was the Centre for Parent/Teacher Partnership, a small group jointly directed by Pat Moss (who had previously led the LEA's Home-School team) and Richard Pring (Professor of the Oxford University Department of Educational Studies (OUDES)). The other forum was The Oxford Partnership, a group mainly composed of Chief Executives and other senior figures from a number of companies and other organisations, most of whom were Oxford-based.

The Centre for Parent/Teacher Partnership (PTP) was based in Norham Road and its advisory group met every few months to advise and support as best it could, despite the very small executive resources available to the PTP. There was less than one full-time-equivalent person employed and that the PTP achieved what it did depended largely on the commitment and unpaid work of Pat Moss. At one meeting the desirability of conducting some research was aired. For the next meeting I prepared a short paper outlining our plans for a PEEP-like project. The group was keen to progress this – perhaps influenced by there being no other papers to consider. Donald McIntyre (then Reader at OUDES) knew how much need and potential there was for such a project and had many ideas as to how it could lend itself to research possibilities; indeed it would benefit from some additional research before its definition and implementation.

Bernard and I felt that there was sufficient existing research on the issue as a whole to be able to assume the desirability of what could be done and to make preparations for PEEP as quickly as possible with only a small amount of initial preparatory research. This was accepted by all. Another early question posed to the PEEP proposers was, 'Do you want the project itself to be primarily a research project, but with

the satisfaction of knowing that significant benefit will be brought to a large number of children; or is the principal aim of the project to maximise the benefit brought to the children in the area, but with significant weight given to its evaluation?' The latter course would mean accepting that any research would be made more difficult and would sometimes be compromised without the protection and 'ring-fencing' of a robust research design. Our answer was emphatically, and without hesitation, the second alternative: this was to be a project about maximising benefit to the children in the area, unconstrained by the perspectives and needs of research.

What we were enthusiastic about was the benefit of learning from all the relevant existing research. We commissioned, through PTP, Janice Grimes (a researcher within OUDES) to prepare a critical review of the research available on children's early development with a particular focus on parental involvement and on other initiatives. The resulting work, undertaken over two months of full-time work, became an important base for planning PEEP.

The second organisational catalyst was The Oxford Partnership (TOP). This small group had come together as the result of an initiative by Business in the Community; they had investigated the extent and causes of the much publicised car-related crimes in Blackbird Leys and wished to take actions to improve the situation. TOP was due to have their next meeting at Peers School and Bernard suggested I might join that meeting. I attended and told those present about our plans for PEEP and how, admittedly in the longer term, it could be an effective way to increase educational attainments and to reduce disaffection, and worse, of future generations of young people. I also asked if they would be able to supply any funding. They were clear they couldn't give any grant as they had no collective funding, but the project sounded promising to them and they asked if Bernard and I would like to join the group. We did. There were meetings every few months, chaired by Peter Williams (Chairman of Oxford Instruments), and the hope was that each member – through their organisation – would make some contribution to the youth of Blackbird Leys. TOP itself would enable information to be shared and it would give collective strength and added effectiveness from bringing together these individual initiatives under a single umbrella. Over the next year, those present were consistently positive about our plans for PEEP. Of particular value was the support of John Hedger, a senior civil servant within the Department of Education, who told us about the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB), a major new government programme which had just been announced; he thought that PEEP might be a good potential candidate.

We followed up his suggestion and were quick off the mark in contacting our regional office, the Government Office for the South East (GOSE), and asking for all possible information on the imminent SRB funding programme. We quickly decided that we would put in a significant application. As intended by such government programmes, even the prospect of a sizeable grant provided the stimulus for us to start preparing a more formal plan and with some haste.

Initial working paper

The project had been planned for the young children of Blackbird Leys only but Bernard suggested that we broaden it to Rose Hill too. The Rose Hill estate hadn't attracted any of the same newspaper headlines but, overall, it suffered from similar levels of socio-economic disadvantage. This area too had its problems, just different ones. I completely accepted Bernard's logic and a few days later came back with an embellishment: if we also included Littlemore, a smaller geographical area outside the Ring Road, our project area could be the same as the catchment area of Peers School, or more specifically 'the original catchment area of the First Schools in the Peers pyramid'. That would give a coherent reason for the choice of our area and also define precisely, with a logic we could easily explain, our area boundaries. It could also provide the project itself with a name. The previous private working name of BLEEP could use the Peers element to become 'PEEP', the Peers Early Education Partnership. Bernard was very positive: it seemed most appropriate to build on the Peers connection and Peers governors were later totally supportive of the project's association with the school. And we liked the sound of the name 'PEEP'!

I produced a working paper for PEEP, 'a proposed early years intervention project', with an assumption that it might last for five years and have an estimated cost of £1m. 'The project may later be extended beyond the initial five years, but this would not be assumed ... Existing organisations with a particular interest in developing the project: Peers School, Centre for Parent/Teacher Partnership, Hamilton Trust ... Concurrent research into the project's effectiveness will be carried out ... A UK registered charity to be set up, with trustees, and advisory council ...' As mentioned in a previous contribution, the paper didn't have much to say about content, what PEEP would actually do, though several possible complementary activities were listed. It was stronger on project principles: collaboration (with everybody and everything); learning from experience and research world-wide (a Not-Invented-Here attitude would not be encouraged); oriented towards achieving the objectives and being cost-effective; ongoing, properly-resourced

evaluation; dissemination of experience; and, above all, with a significant focus on involvement of parents.

The initial objective was listed as 'to gain a significant improvement in educational achievements at age seven', with reasons given as 'ability at age seven is a good predictor for educational achievement at age eighteen and beyond'; and 'basic literacy at age seven is necessary for pupils to benefit fully from later schooling'. PEEP's later objectives later improved to become more refined and educationally precise, but that was where we were in February 1994. The justifications then given were as follows:

- for national and local reasons: UK and local economies will require a significantly higher level of education for the general population; lower crime rates (and greater tolerance and social cohesion) are likely to be positive outcomes of more successful education; the project should provide lessons, positive and negative, for other similar initiatives; and
- for the individual: maximising the potential of each person; improved educational achievements lead to a lower likelihood of unemployment, generally higher incomes and greater job satisfaction and choice.

Planning for a 1995 start

Preparations continued during 1994. A statistical demographic analysis was defined and commissioned with the help of George and Teresa Smith and their colleagues within the Department of Applied Social Studies. Teresa was also most helpful in helping to construct interview schedules with a number of mothers and with professionals working in the area. We wanted to build a project on the basis of what mothers felt they wanted and needed, taking into account what professionals in the area already did and what they thought could be done. The interviews with parents, and the subsequent analysis and report, were conducted by Frances Duffy and Barbara Slatter. Their findings were useful and above all completely supportive of the PEEP plans. All of the nineteen mothers interviewed gave positive reactions and all said they would be interested in going along to groups to find out more about their children's education; they thought they could be more involved if they had more information on child development. Confidence was often lacking; interest was not.

The next stages were to form a Steering Group to get the project going and, later, also to form a charitable trust. With the latter, we were able to draw on the help of Ken Brooks, a lawyer experienced in charity matters and a trustee of Hamilton Trust. Interestingly, there was an issue with the Charity Commission of whether it was sufficiently

meaningful to include an objective of helping the education of children as young as 0-3: these questions faithfully reflected the general assumption that children's education started at school or nursery school. However, although we knew that sometimes applications could take some time, we were pleased that ours passed through smoothly. This narrative jumping ahead a little in time, we were granted registered charity status in July 1995.

The initial trustees were Bernard Clarke, Ken Brooks, myself and a new Chairman. We had decided in principle that we would be a stronger organisation if we could attract a senior and independent figure as our Chair and we were delighted when Sir Colin McColl accepted our request. His experience as the head of a government department and his intellect, integrity and warmth should all, we thought, help PEEP in future years – and so it has proved. Our one serious omission as a board of trustees, our lack of early years experience [not to mention the lack of a woman trustee in a project dealing almost exclusively with mothers], was not corrected until we leapt at our new director's suggestion and were joined by Rosemary Peacocke. Rosemary, previously Chief Primary HMI and much else besides, had and has a work schedule which made a nonsense of her claim to have retired – but we are privileged that she has found the time to give the project exceptional support since her appointment.

In the initial Steering Group, Bernard and I were joined by Jill Head (the LEA's link adviser for schools in Blackbird Leys) and Donald McIntyre (Reader within OUDES). Our main task was to decide on the leadership of the project. Bernard's and my soundings with different friends and colleagues had several times prompted the same name to be mentioned, that of Bill Laar. Bill had previously been chief primary adviser within Oxfordshire and most recently had been chief adviser and deputy chief education officer for Westminster City Council. He was known as a passionate advocate of literacy and literature and someone who could, without parallel, inspire and charm groups – specifically including parents – to the benefit of children's education. A senior figure who knew Bill's work well said, 'With Bill's involvement, the project will be doomed to succeed'. Bill was very interested but his time was already under great pressure: he would not be able to work more than a day or two a week and he volunteered that he would not be the right person to be responsible for the operational management of the project or its staff.

The Steering Group decided we should appoint two co-directors, one being Bill and the other being full-time and being responsible, amongst other things, for the management of the staff and the overall operation of the project. We then devised and implemented a thorough

recruitment schedule. In September 1994 we advertised in the TES, Guardian and Oxford Times and, having had a good response, shortlisted five applicants for interview. We think we were thorough (with a combination of education and business recruitment practices) and were relieved to have two exceptionally strong people from whom to make our final choice. We offered the post of co-director to Rosie Roberts, then head of West Oxford Nursery School but also having a number of innovative Early Years responsibilities (academic, training, curriculum) and a great deal of extremely relevant experience. We had to sell ourselves hard to compete with Rosie's other plans but were delighted when she agreed to our offer.

So, in January 1995 PEEP planning was able to begin, with Rosie Roberts and Bill Laar as the two co-directors and with an ambitious timescale to start operations from April, the beginning of PEEP's first year.

Early memories about PEEP
From Bernard Clarke, ex-Headteacher of Peers School and a PEEP Trustee

- Ever since joining Peers in January 1988, anger about the social class divisions in Oxford.
- An increasing sense of certainty (frequently rehearsed at governors' meetings and elsewhere) that secondary schools, particularly 'uppers' like Peers, will only make a substantial impact on student achievement by starting work with children and their families much, much earlier, preferably from Day One. My wife would say you need to start at ante-natal clinic!
- The utter exhilaration of the early discussions with one of my governors and others about how we might actually do something practical and long-term to create a culture of learning in the area. The growing sense that something was actually going to happen.
- The pure certainty that it would happen when an adviser wrote quoting the sermon of a nineteenth-century priest stressing to parents the importance of encouraging their children to 'peep' into books! (Sadly I have lost my copy of the letter.)
- The sense at the first Advisory Group meeting attended by everybody who was anybody in the field that we were really onto something special.

From Jill Head, an ex-Primary Adviser for English and a PEEP Trustee

My earliest memory is before PEEP had a name. I was invited to meet with the Headteacher and a governor of Peers School, to discuss an

idea. The meeting was in the Headteacher's office, and started with him and the governor exploring the possibility of some early intervention that would give Blackbird Leys youngsters a greater chance of academic achievement when they transferred to Peers Upper School.

From the outset, the governor's agenda included phonics and the alphabet – a theme he returned to frequently. The meetings were regular – about two or three times a term – and gradually one or two more people became involved. Another re-occurring theme was the complexity of research, the size of the cohort and the geographical limits.

I was always impressed by the quiet determination of the governor. He had a vision from the start, but it was blurred. Gradually it took shape as he listened and learned – and with the Co-directors' appointment the whole project fell into place.

From Philip Gammage, Professor of Early Childhood Research in South Australia, and Chairman of PEEP's Advisory Group

I have three memories in particular. The first is of listening to Rosie talk on self esteem in childhood. She talked not in some impractical way, but in a way which united theory and practice, and displayed someone acutely aware that responsibility, persistence and the skills to explore the world appropriately came from a sense of attachment, consistency and predictability in early childhood.

The second, the meetings at Nottingham University where we tried to diagrammatise 'the big picture' and where Rosie spoke persuasively and passionately about the critical need for support for many of the families she knew.

And the third is of a growing awareness of the dedication and hard work which Rosie was prepared to put in; and on occasion concern about the weight of work and responsibility generated by her role. With this came her ability to nurture the project and to respond sensitively to the large range of different (and often conflicting) expectations brought by the many stakeholders.

From Rosemary Peacocke, an ex HMI and a PEEP Trustee

During my time in the Inspectorate I had been informed of the many and various schemes which had been set up around the country to help parents in areas of deprivation. I had been very interested in these ventures and visited some of the parents and support teams involved. In 1973 I wrote that early literacy should begin in the ante-natal clinic when the mother was motivated to learn about her baby, and that

there should be an interdisciplinary team including the health visitor and a teacher to advise and encourage her. It is no wonder that when I first heard about PEEP through visits from a Trustee and one of the Co-directors I realised this was something very close to my heart and I was keen to be involved. I did not feel, however, that I could give the time to chair the Advisory group, so agreed to be a member of this group at the request of a very persuasive Co-director who assured me it would be three days a year. The fact that this grew to thirty days a year and I am still very much involved says much for the project and those who are involved.

From Rosie Roberts, Co-Director of PEEP

In the spring and summer of 1995 I read as much as I could about early literacy projects, and now and then found myself reading a paper or book by someone whom I knew I could learn a great deal from if only I could get to talk to them. I went to talk to everyone I could who came into this category. Two that I remember particularly clearly were Professor Peter Hannon and Professor Philip Gammage, both of whom were most generous in their help and encouragement. I had read about Dr Hannon's 'ORIM' model, and wanted to ask his permission to use it in PEEP in a wider way to include self-esteem and dispositions. I came away from the meetings with a reassuring sense of interest and support for the work we were planning.

I remember very clearly the reassurance of having, in Bill Laar, a Co-director of such wisdom, experience and charisma with whom I could discuss the seemingly never-ending stream of opportunities and challenges that came our way. And throughout the five years I was aware of my great good fortune in having the support of the Trustees and the Advisory group; an exceptional group of people, headed for the most part by Colin and Rosemary who have been enormously helpful. In particular I was fortunate in being able to turn to Mike at any time – and in the first few years it was an enormous number of times; knowing that his very remarkable vision and commitment underpinned the many ways in which he helped me to do things better. Another great good fortune has been, from the very beginning, the staff we have appointed. Their ability and commitment has been absolutely outstanding, with the combined efforts of all the people who joined it making the whole project so special.

The approach we had in mind echoed some conclusions of HOPE, a project first launched 1968 in Appalachia in the United States. Like HOPE, PEEP would also work with parents and other adults in a structured way about their children's home learning, by valuing and

extending what they already do with their children. We hoped that PEEP's early start (most babies starting at six – eight weeks), regular sessions, use of music, and the continuity of sessions from birth to five all might help to promote positive outcomes.

Two aspects of PEEP that did not feature frequently in other literacy projects were the use of music and the work with babies and their parents and carers from birth. We included these things because we knew that the structure and the emotional richness of many songs, rhymes and stories could significantly enhance the development of the intimate relationships – between mother and baby, and with other important adults – in the first five years of life. We saw this as the seedbed for the parent-child interactions which are the foundations of literacy.

I remember being introduced to an epidemiologist by one of the Advisory Group, just as I was wondering just how we should begin. We had been thinking of starting with just a group or two in each level (by age) but his strong advice was to build in a structure from the beginning that would enable us to build up in a reasonably predictable way. He suggested beginning with babies and three-year-olds, and 'filling in' the others as we went along. This is what we did, and I still remember his advice with gratitude so often. The structure has paid off again and again in terms of logic and clarity. In particular it meant we could develop the programme in a much more thorough and manageable way, taking babies and threes in the first year, ones and fours in the second year, and twos in the third year.

From Rosie Roberts, Co-Director of PEEP

In August 1996, a year after the project had begun in earnest, a very critical evaluation concluded that an urgent review of PEEP was needed, and even suggested a completely new start on a different (but unidentified) basis.

The problem centred around PEEP's approach to parents, and a concern that a deficit model was being imposed on parents, with insufficient acknowledgement of their existing support for their children's learning. Looking back, there seems to have been a misunderstanding at the heart of this conclusion, about PEEP's intention to impose such a model. Undoubtedly we had embarked on a very challenging task, and undoubtedly we had a very great deal to learn about how to succeed in working genuinely in partnership with parents – building on their commitment, knowledge and understanding of their children while offering the information for which they were asking. We had been failing to learn fast enough

about how to tackle the task, but was it the case that we were not even intent on the task? We had also failed to make our intentions clear.

In discussion it emerged that positive aspects of our work over the year had been omitted as unnecessary to mention; and once this had emerged it became easier to focus on the problem. What was really challenging was the stark picture of how we were seen to have been failing to achieve the positive partnership of equals for which we were striving (and which was in fact the reason for our adoption of the ORIM model as the basis of the work with parents). This report, difficult as it was to assimilate, accelerated a major turning point in how home visitors recruited and how the group leaders ran their groups. There followed a long series of discussions and training sessions about the issues. We were convinced that we would have to learn how to be explicit on a day-to-day basis – with parents and others – about our values and philosophy and about why the programme was as it was. Only if this happened would parents be able to contribute and be partners in its development. This determination has underpinned all the subsequent work, and in retrospect was a real turning point which led to greater clarity and credibility with parents about the assumptions and purposes of the project. A look at the positive numbers relating to recruitment and retention at this time and in subsequent terms seems to indicate that all this effort paid off. Although the memory of anxiety and frustration remains, looking back four years later it is also clear that productive perspectives emerged.

Looking back at the first year, an important element was the information and thinking of the evaluation team whose work focused on important issues for the PEEP team to address. Foremost among these were the project's strategies for working with parents, the activities and interactions provided in PEEP sessions, and the materials provided by the project. We were particularly aware of the need to work more directly and explicitly with parents about their children's learning. The decision initially to focus mainly on group work with parents was made for a variety of reasons, some of them to do with outcomes that follow from this way of working (for instance mutual support and sharing of expertise between parents).

The evaluation team highlighted the difficulties of dealing with the PEEP curriculum issues in group settings, rather than at home. It was clear that group leaders' and parents' perceptions and use of the Yellow Book pages and guidelines – and of 'talking times' about these things – were the areas which were most challenging to deal with and which needed continuous monitoring and adjustment.

S I started as a sessional home visitor in 1996 when everything was very new, but not right at the beginning. The first week sticks in my mind. There was something very unusual, and for me, very special about the project. From the minute I walked in to the PEEP room in Windale school I felt that I was respected by staff for the skills I brought and expected to develop together with the rest of the staff. There was respect for parents that was the cornerstone of everything, together with the idea that there was an enormous amount we didn't know about parents and how to work together with them and lots we wanted to learn. There was a complete absence of the stereotypes around families that one sometimes encounters in educational projects. And no educational jargon at all. Part of the expectation of learning was that I would try and look at my own background and review what kind of preconceptions I came with.

The quality of interaction at the ground level expected between staff and families was high and exciting. There was a questioning ethos and an investigative approach to developing the project harnessing a high academic level of research. We were trying to put the two together.

The organisation of materials for staff use was extremely high – all the time there was this feeling that you had to give of your best and you needed to learn too. Expectations were high. Staff and families' opinions were genuinely listened to. There was a sense that everyone was trying to look at things afresh and that an important part of the work was to try and see how we would preserve all these things as the project developed. It was very exciting.

S The Co-directors had thought a lot about what we would do, and then I was appointed as Groups Co-ordinator. They said 'Your job is to put the theory into practice.' So we spread all the curriculum out on the floor to see how it would fit into five years. We used the idea of a cyclical or spiral curriculum, together with the broad framework of the group session for talking time, for circle time, activity/circle games and songs, for borrowing books and playpacks and for stories. At the start we had not thought about how important it would be to make scrap materials available. And the idea of book sharing came later in the term when we realised how much mileage there was in the group leader and all the parents modelling using picture books in different ways, not just reading the text. We knew there would always be parents and carers who feel unconfident about reading.

In the Pilot group for Threes in Blackbird Leys we were doing a game of What's the Time Mr. Wolf? One child did not want his mum to be joining in the game with him but she really wanted to be part of it – she was enjoying the game. So he kicked his mum, and she hit him back – all within full view of the group. We had to carry on as if nothing had happened and somehow contain the strong feelings – from everyone – which had suddenly erupted.

This incident made us stop and think what we should do about violent behaviour in groups by both children and adults, and whether we could – or should – try to effect a change in attitude. This was primarily a literacy project, rather than a parenting one. What was our line? Having to sort this out taught us so much about managing situations in groups. It led to our ground rules – reinforced by a training session from staff at the Pen Green Centre. All the time we used the two pilot groups (in the first year the Robins for babies and the Swallows for threes) as the basis for developing what we were doing – all of us learning from experience.

I remember starting to think about the Alphabet Song in the Summer term 1996. We were sitting at Windale discussing it and making the list of images which illustrated schemas – eg helicopter. It was useful to find words (we needed to!) which rhymed with 'sounds' and which would fit into the embryonic form of the rhythm and melody I was carrying around in my head as I drove to work. Hence we had, 'i is for insects crawling around' or 'out of the ground' and 'o is for orange that's orange and round'. But we also had to keep a balance of things which were well-known to children in our families – hence 'y' was not for yacht but for yoghurt; and 'h' was not for horse but for helicopter. But now I wonder what happens if we want to translate the song – say into Welsh, or Portuguese?

Wonderfully, people kept coming up with suggestions about things to do and ideas to try. Sometimes the advantages were immediately obvious, but we always had to think about new ideas in relation to the aims of the project. Whatever we did had to be universally available and also replicable – and so sometimes an idea would have been wonderful for a project working with fifty or so families but not with five hundred or five thousand. It was this aim to work with the whole population that generated the need for a clearly identified curriculum, together with a consistent mode of delivery. And it was this need for structures that made it difficult always to

respond completely to parents, working in ways that acknowledged their individual contributions. This was why the ORIM model was such a wonderful structure to use, as it enabled us to build on what parents already do, as the basis of the sessions.

The use of a particular set of structures brought with it another concern. Once these were established, how would we retain the creativity and sense of individual journey and ownership, both for parents and for staff? So all along it was a case of developing a programme that was underpinned by a consistent set of defining structures, but that would be sufficiently flexible to remain dynamic. The defining structures – in the PEEP principles, the Guidelines and the session plans – had to be made abundantly clear to people – and if the project was to remain dynamic they needed to know them so well that they could 'play' with them. All along there has been a very real balancing act between structures and individual initiative, and it has related as much to structures based on shared values and goals as it does to curriculum content and delivery.

During the summer of 1995 there was such a lot to sort out. Using the starting point of the literature review, the local interviews and Steering Group discussions, three aims were proposed by the Co-directors and agreed by Trustees. These were:

- To support adults – especially parents – in the PEEP area, to enhance children's learning at home and at school.
- To achieve a significant lasting improvement in educational achievement by as many PEEP children as possible, especially in relation to literacy.
- To develop a successful, transferable, cost-effective model which would complement existing pre-school and school provision.

An early report shows that by the end of the first year we had decided on fifteen objectives that would be really important:

1 We would work in genuine partnership with parent and carers.
2 We would aim to develop partnerships with other providers.
3 We would aim for all families in the PEEP area to have equal access to the project.
4 We would do our very best to meet special needs of children and of their parents and carers in relation to supporting their children's learning at home.
5 We would develop special strategies to support bi-lingual children and families.
6 We would use Dr Peter Hannon's ORIM model as the basis of our programme and its delivery.

7 We would include literacy, numeracy, self-concept and dispositions in our curriculum. (Later, we came to put self-concept and dispositions at the front of this list.)
8 We would include music and related activities as a vital part of the project.
9 We would support home-school partnerships.
10 We would continue to draw on work of others in the early education field.
11 We would hope to recruit staff from the PEEP area.
12 Training, staff development and support would be an important priority.
13 We would aim to empower children and parents, avoiding a culture of dependency.
14 The main focus would be on the core programme, but the intention was also to develop some 'across-the-board' strategies for children and families who would not otherwise benefit directly from PEEP.
15 We would always aim for efficient and effective use of resources to achieve the aims of the project.

Surprisingly there was no mention in this list of supplying literacy resources, especially books, to families at home, although this was certainly planned and implemented, and should have been included.

Three sets of intended outcomes were identified:

- For parents and carers: to know about, understand and use the ORIM model to support their children's learning
- For other providers in the PEEP area: to know about the PEEP curriculum, to value and collaborate with PEEP, and to actively engage in supporting and extending parents' and carers' involvement in their children's learning, and in PEEP
- For children at school entry:
  - feeling good about themselves
  - listening carefully
  - talking about their thoughts and feelings
  - knowing many stories, songs and rhymes
  - having a good vocabulary
  - recognising their own written name
  - recognising numbers and letters, and knowing both letter names and letter sounds
  - knowing about the different reasons for reading and for writing
  - wanting to learn how to read and write

Looking back, it is easier to see now that some of the early decisions about recruiting staff and managing the project were fundamental. During the first year we were thinking about the processes whereby important decisions were made, and how to manage the project. The Trustees became the decision-making accountable body; the Advisory Group was not to be a decision-making body, but its advice was vital to the PEEP team, the Evaluation team and to the Trustees; and a smaller Strategy Group was drawn from the Advisory Group, to make recommendations to the Trustees.

Six months after the project had started there were six people working for PEEP, most of them part-time: two co-directors, a groups co-ordinator, a resources co-ordinator and assistant and an administrator. We had decided to concentrate initially on setting up groups, but by now we were developing and piloting a home-visiting intervention, to clarify the purpose, capacity needed and possible outcomes, the content, and the training, monitoring and evaluation that would be needed to develop this in a major way. This led later to a small targeted Home Programme at the Baby Level, which has recently been subsumed into PEEP Link.

Developing the programme for what we now call Foundation PEEP (for Threes and Fours) has felt like a very long and tortuous process, and is still on-going. This was partly because of shifting perceptions about what would be most helpful to include, and largely (especially latterly) because of PEEP Foundation Level's context of other local and national developments in the pre-schools and nursery classes, and in the early education field generally.

One of the turning points in the development of the programme for the older children was when we began to think about the Alphabet Song. In August '96 we were about to start developing and piloting Nursery PEEP, and during the development of Big PEEP the previous year we had been concentrating on the needs of the three-year-olds in the groups we were running. There had been nothing to indicate that we should re-think most early education practitioners' view that grapheme and phoneme work should be preceded by a solid foundation of experiences in auditory discrimination, and should be accompanied by a real interest in books and environmental print, and the meaning it carries. Much of PEEP for Threes was about laying this solid foundation.

However, our intended outcomes in relation to children's knowledge of sounds and letters meant that this issue should be

addressed in some PEEP-appropriate way in the Nursery level. During the summer of 1996 the idea took shape of combining the exciting new thinking in early education about children's schemas with all the sensory memory 'hooks' that children use to remember things by association – hearing, seeing, touching, tasting, smelling, moving – and of course playing. We would use parents' home strategies (generally alphabet-based) as a starting point for supporting children's knowledge of sounds and the letters that represent them. This was how the idea for the PEEP Alphabet started, and perhaps the schematic basis of it is why the song and the activities have proved so popular with children of this age (and indeed with many younger siblings), and so accessible for parents. A while ago I was astonished and delighted to hear a two-year-old happily singing the Alphabet song as he walked along the street with his mother and older brother.

There was a debate in – I think – 1997 when Working Areas were set up in PEEP, about whether equal opportunities should have a special area and co-ordinator, or whether every working area should have a brief to include equal opportunities within their work. We decided to play safe and give it a special place, but with the possibility that it would become so established that a special place might later no longer be needed.

Looking back, five very important aspects of PEEP seem to have been:

- Deciding to offer groups rather than individual home visits
- Using music – interactive songs and rhymes
- Running groups for parents and carers with babies – the earliest possible intervention we could achieve
- The idea for a 'generation' project – stretching beyond 2005, with a rationale for public funding
- Coping with expansion

Diary

1994

November Full-time co-director appointed.
November Literature Review.
November Local consultation of parents and providers.

1995

January – March Full-time Co-director worked one day a week.
April Full-time Co-director took up post, working independently from home until September.
September Five staff in PEEP (most part-time).
October Two Pilot groups, one for babies, one for threes.
October First Advisory Group meeting (subsequently three and then two times a year).
October First Steering/Trustees Meeting (subsequently at least termly).

1996

January Six new Baby groups and six new Big PEEP groups.
September Two new pilot groups, one Small PEEP (ones and twos) and one Nursery PEEP (for fours).
November Director to Challenge Fund meeting at Headington Hill Hall.

1997

January Six more Small groups and Nursery PEEP in five more First School nursery classes.
January Director met with CEO about PEEP progress and strategies for continuing PEEP in the future.
September Discussions with Andrew Smith MP and Graham Badman CEO about sustainability and transferability.
November Director's presentation to Oxfordshire County Council Performance and Quality Sub-Committee.

1998

January PEEP Learning Bridge started.
January Series of discussions about making a funding application to continue, research, expand and transfer PEEP.
January Discussions within PEEP re three developmental issues: 'Oxfordshire Babies' (PEEP for % of Oxfordshire, proposed by the CEO); Funding proposal to the Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust; New Nursery PEEP model proposed for September (which would

include the first pilot elements of 'Network PEEP').

April Liaison with LEA Adviser for English.

1999

January onwards Managing Sure Start implications for PEEP policy and practice.

April Implications of PEEP lead partner role for PEEP Trustees as accountable body.

May – August Sure Start Delivery Plan work.

September All-staff training session articulated PEEP's philosophy and located it in programme delivery.

September Hand over leading development of Rose Hill-Littlemore Sure Start to new local Sure Start Director.

December Meeting with HE colleague re 0-3's policy, PEEP plans, government's new Foundation Key Stage.

December Discussions re interface between PEEP and Hamilton projects, in relation to interventions offered to schools and to PEEP research.

2000

January Director invited to present to House of Commons Select Committee on Education seminar to begin their review of early education.

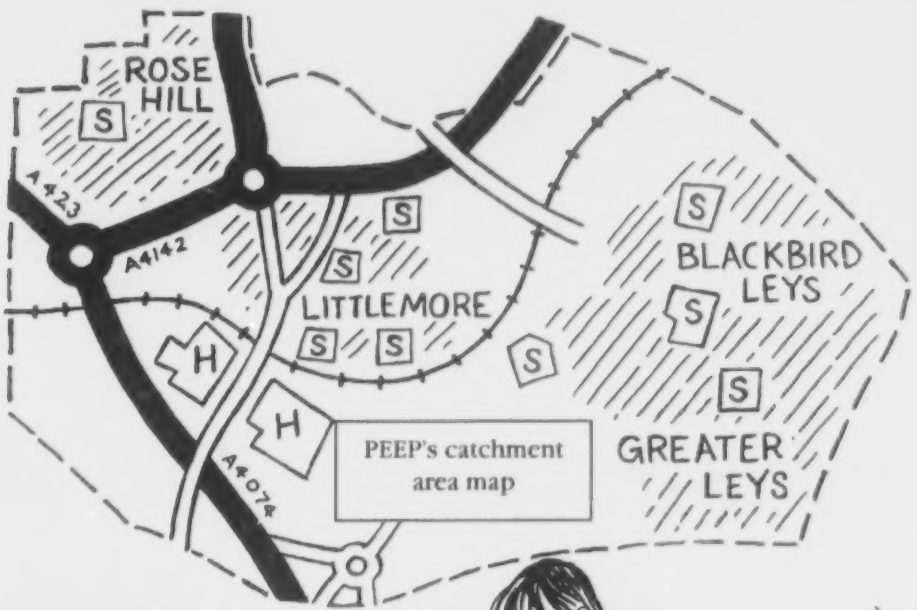
March Volunteer fundraiser has offered his services.

May 'Strategic Dinner': requested by Trustees, to look at issues relating to concept of PEEP as a 'generation project'.

July Discussions re 'PEEP Trading' (in relation to dissemination).

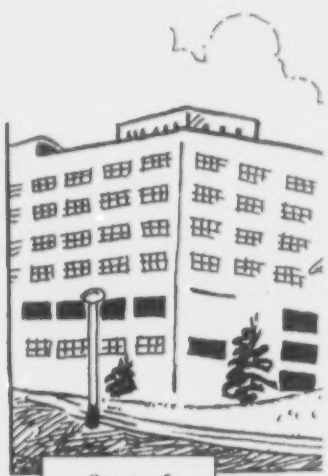
Chapter 2

'Families' looks at the first, vital process of doing PEEP: recruitment. What does it take to find – and to keep – the families?



PEEP's catchment area map

First two pilot groups recruited



Start of John Radcliffe Hospital recruitment

Families

2

This bridge will only take you halfway there
To those mysterious lands you long to see:
Through gypsy camps and swirling Arab fairs
And moonlit woods where unicorns run free.
So come and walk a while with me and share
The twisting trails and wondrous worlds I've known.
But this bridge will only take you halfway there.
The last few steps you'll have to take alone.

SHEL SILVERSTEIN

Bi-lingual support workers for groups and home visiting

Link Visits Co-ordinator appointed

346 births recorded on the data-base in 12-month period

1998 1999 2000

Chapter 2 : Families

Although we had been asked to work with *all* the families in the area with children under five, we had no systematic way of contacting them. The only people who already worked with everyone were Health Visitors, and they were wonderfully helpful in telling as many families about us as they could. But as families might be registered with a health practice anywhere in the city, any system was going to be very complicated. I remember going around putting up notices in all the public places like post offices, libraries, clinics, advice centres and so on – but knowing that people don't usually read notices and then act on them. I wished I had the time and the courage to just stand outside the local shops and catch people to let them know about the idea of PEEP, so that we could get it going.

Eventually it was possible to collaborate with the hospital in order to contact new babies, and this collaboration transformed the situation. However data protection is a major issue, and there is still no fail-safe way of getting information to the families of children who were born before this arrangement began in December 1996, nor to families who move into the area after their baby is born. Of course the longer the project runs, the more it becomes just 'what happens around here', and new families will hear about it. But looking back, the issue of successfully making contact with *all* families so that they can access what we can offer has been – and remains – one of the most challenging problems of all.

We try and visit about 350 families a year at home.There are ups and downs to visiting families to let them know about PEEP. Half the families are not on the phone and you go around trying to find them. I remember days when just no-one is in at the addresses you have been given – it's cold and rainy and that can be quite dispiriting. But then there's always this quite exciting feeling that you are going to meet someone new and families are so varied – it is really very interesting. It feels like a privilege to go into so many people's homes. I am struck by how very friendly and welcoming people often are to me – a stranger. Cups of tea – sometimes I've had a spread of bhajis and dips ready and waiting for the appointment. And people are often so very open about their lives. When people get involved in PEEP for the first time the idea that we will work together over the years and find a way of working which will suit them is very satisfying.

S It was June 1996 when I set off for my first recruitment visit. Map in hand I found my way to the correct number in Field Avenue. It was a block of flats. As I approached the staircase wondering whether the flat I wanted was up or down, a mother with a young baby was bumping down the steps. I smiled and asked whether the number I needed was on the top level. She replied that that was her flat and I quickly explained I was from PEEP. After what seemed a long moment she said that it sounded interesting, and she decided that her shopping could be done later. As I was helping her to get the buggy back upstairs I was nervously wondering how I was going to describe PEEP so that she felt able to come to a group.

O I remember Rosie coming into the Nursery and telling me briefly about PEEP and her plans to start with a pilot group of mums and babies. I think her words were, 'I'm starting a group with babies, but I don't know where the babies are. Do you know any?' The Nursery Nurse and I spent the next few weeks judging the burgeoning bulges of various Nursery mums. Of the pilot group I still see four mums regularly. Two mums are LSAs, another works in a playgroup (just doing the training arranged by Sure Start) and a fourth is a child minder and was on the committee for choosing books for Reading is Fundamental. She told me being in PEEP had made her far more familiar with books/authors and she now had the confidence to do this.

S This was my first recruitment visit. Just before Christmas '96 – having had a short but intensive training by the Recruitment and Community Co-ordinator – I went to visit a family in Blackbird Leys who had accepted the visit but were actually waiting to go out to do Christmas shopping. There was Mum, Dad, a toddler and the new baby. It was a very small front room. We all sat round and I tried desperately to remember all I needed to communicate and record. I remember being too hot – overdressed, overloaded (bag full of books and folders) and overanxious. They signed up for a PEEP Group for the baby and the toddler, I think, (it was this complication which threw me) and I came away conscious that this very uncomfortable twenty minutes for me would potentially be the start of something very significant for them and therefore worth it.

S We had a great party day to let people in Greater Leys know about PEEP. We called it 'PEEP At the Barn', and there were

wonderful books for sale, and PEEP buns (hot cross buns with a P instead of an X on them) and story-telling. We had songs and dressed up and had PEEP balloons, and there was a real party atmosphere. Another time a couple of years later we had 'PEEP Library Day and Magic Picnics', another day that went very well with story-telling and lots of things to do in the libraries for children and families. And of course we had the first mammoth PEEP Certificate Fair.
I remember the huge amount of organisation these occasions needed, and a slight feeling of disappointment that although they were reasonably well attended they were not packed out (except that the Fair was) – and also that there seemed to be no way of assessing whether the expenditure of resources needed to run these things (both time and money) was really worth it in relation to the aims of the project.

I remember the family recruitment visit by a PEEP Recruitment Home Visitor to introduce me to PEEP finally gave me the sense that I had been needing of belonging to the Community and not feeling alone.

My job for PEEP is to visit families who do not speak English and need me to explain to them about PEEP in their own language of Urdu or Bengali. I visited a house where the family wasn't keen to come to the group. They said they were too tired and too busy. I was upset, because I felt that I was there to be of some help. So I went back again – but they still did not want to come.

I think PEEP needs to be more informed about the needs and expectations of ethnic minority families (Bengali and Urdu speakers) so that it can be more relevant to them. Perhaps Sure Start can help with this. It will take time – and more time.

I was making my way to the travellers' site in Littlemore for the first time. I was following up a request from a family who had heard about PEEP at the Blackbird Leys Fair but who had no telephone so I had been unable to make an appointment. I found a place to stop which prompted all the resident dogs to bark. I got out and was bombarded by dogs and children asking who I was and why I had come. After much shouting I was escorted to the right caravan where I knocked. The door was opened by the person I had come to see. She asked me to wait a few minutes, went back inside and obviously asked all the men to leave. Then I was asked in to sit down with the other women to talk about PEEP.

S I was in Rose Hill area. I was pretty scared, going by myself. I was sent to a house and the woman said she wanted to come to PEEP because she didn't speak English. So I used to collect her from her house and bring her to the group. She did really well.

S Thinking about co-ordinating recruiting families for PEEP in my first year with the project, there are some things that I remember especially, most of which we still do. The majority of home visits were to families of new babies. The families received a letter three weeks after their baby was born and we tried to arrange an appointment at four weeks. Each family was offered a home visit, and we tried to be really clear about why we were going. The really important things were

- Acknowledging the importance of parents as first educators
- Giving information about what PEEP offers them (including lending the PEEP video)
- Inviting the family to be involved in PEEP

Here are some facts about that time. Between 1.4.98 and 31.3.99 there were 352 babies born in the catchment area. Contact was made with 294 of these families. A home visit was made to 178 families. (We found that families who have had experience of PEEP with an older sibling often do not wish an additional home visit.) Of all the families with a new baby 53% enrolled in PEEP at some level. Approximately 10% of families who say they want to come do not subsequently attend groups; so we send them Network PEEP, as we do for all the families who decline enrolment.

Here are some of the characteristics of enrolling families at that time. 27% of families enrolling in the birth cohort 1.4.98-31.3.99 were from minority groups. PEEP families on roll spoke eighteen different languages at home. 55% of mothers in enrolling families at Baby Level left full-time education at sixteen or earlier.

These were two of our equal opportunities strategies at that time.

- Employment of bi-lingual support workers in groups and on home visits (Urdu, Bengali, Hindi, Arabic, Punjabi)
- Arrangements made with the Travellers Education Department to visit Travellers' sites

Here are some facts about retention. Babies enrolling in PEEP stay for

varying lengths of time. In Autumn '98 Baby group leaders were asked to spend more time specifically following up, with telephone calls or letters or personal visits, those families who did not attend for two weeks, in an effort to retain as many families as possible in groups. Training included strategies for all group staff in helping everyone feel welcome, in managing 'normal' challenging behaviour and in promoting borrowing (books and packs).

Of the 163 babies who enrolled during the Summer, Autumn and Spring terms 1998 –1999, 104 remained on roll for Summer Term 1999 (retention 64%). Reasons given to us for not continuing with PEEP were predominately work commitments. This was just one factor in the rationale behind the development of Network PEEP.

"I am often struck by the need for PEEP to stick with pursuing the hard-to-reach families because so often their need is very great. The effect and value of the groups is vital too, and I have seen some families so excited and grateful for what PEEP gives them. It will be interesting to see how PEEP Link works. Maybe just keeping touch, tracking addresses and phone numbers so that when a mother *is* ready (at two maybe if not at birth) she might take up the offer of PEEP.

Diary

1995

July First two pilot groups recruited: families contacted mainly through a First School Nursery class (for babies – siblings of nursery children) and a playgroup (for the Threes).

November Recruitment of families through Oxford NHS Health Trust.

December Health Visitors, Schools, Play-groups, Parent and Toddler groups actively involved in recruiting families.

December Plan for sharing out recruitment between all Centre staff failed due mainly to lack of time. New groups mainly recruited by Director and Groups Co-ordinator.

1996

March Alternative plan for Summer Term recruiting – this time by Group Leaders – failed again; so recruitment this term as before.

June Recruitment for September comprehensively rescued by volunteer offer of help. In this Summer Term 120 enrolled children attended groups.

September Recruitment and Home Visits Co-ordinator took up post.

September Two new pilot groups, Swallows (Small PEEP) and Pegasus (Nursery PEEP). Both started very positively and were well attended.

September Fourteen groups running with 206 families.

September Discussions with John Radcliffe Hospital about system for recruiting baby families, which would start with information to families at birth.

September John Radcliffe Hospital meeting with Recruitment and Home Visits Co-ordinator: permission to visit all new babies at the hospital, details of system to be agreed, hope to start on Nov 1st. Will involve daily contact with the Hospital.

September Home visiting programme taking shape. (Originally it was decided to develop group sessions initially and return to home-visiting as needs became apparent; after one year it has become appropriate to develop PEEP visits at home. The project is currently running a pilot to investigate the purposes and desirable outcomes of home visits, their content, the training and support that home visitors will require, and the monitoring and evaluation that will be needed.)

October 217 children have been enrolled in the project over the first year.

Only babies and three-year-olds are enrolled, and so a significant number of siblings who attended groups are not counted in this number.

September – October There have been 1004 attendances by families at group sessions: 140 in the first term, 250 in the second, and 614 in the third. Assuming an average of 2.5 attendees per family (parent/carer, child, and possibly sibling), this amounts to approximately 2510 significant interactions during the year.

October Estimated number of groups needed next term:

Baby x10
Small x 6
Big x 10
Nursery x 7.

October Discussions re what to say about 'returns' to HVs and others, because of two major changes in recruitmen: 1) JR plan, and 2) now we can recruit any child under five (no longer age–related).

November Well-known children's book author and illustrator doing new 'inclusive' image for recruitment leaflet.

November Co-director to City Health Visitors meeting to inform re change to recruiting arrangements. Query re how we would inform families moving into the area. Need help from HVs on this one.

December Start of recruitment in the John Radcliffe Hospital. System going well so far, JR staff extremely helpful and positive about the project.

December Births on database for twelve months: 375.

1997

January Discussions about purpose and content of first baby home visits. Issue that it is as important to explain the definition and purpose of PEEP (*what* it is) – essentially the curriculum contained in the material – as *how* it works (with the options of groups, home visits, video etc).

January and February Small and Nursery started, so sixteen existing groups plus sixteen new groups = thirty-two groups in all, with maximum eighteen on roll instead of twelve.

January and February 67% of baby population contacted and are enrolled or attending a sibling's group.

January to March Analysis of attendance rates shows a positively consolidated pattern of attendance:
twice as many groups (thirty-two)
eighteen on roll per group instead of twelve
higher proportion of those on roll attended first session.

March Around 400 families on roll with 350 attending and new families are enrolling every week. Of the 389 babies born in the last year 48% of families enrolled into Baby PEEP A further 10% were already involved in the project with an older child.

April 526 children and their families and carers on roll.

May Nine different first languages currently in the project: Hindi, Urdu, Portugese, Bosnian, Punjabi, Bengali, German, Malay – and English.

July Programme is delivered in over forty weekly groups.

December Births on database for twelve months: 414.

1998

April Discussions re new PEEP database for adults.

Summer Total attending 351 (not including Nursery classes).

Autumn Total attending 396 (not including Nursery classes).

December Births on database for twelve months: 445.

1999

April Total attending 388 (not including Nursery classes and playgroups).

Summer Total attending 341 (not including Nursery classes and playgroups).

Autumn Total attending 343 (not including Nursery classes and playgroups).

December Births on data-base for twelve months: 346.

2000

Januaruy Link visits issues and planning.

April Total attending 358 (not including Nursery classes and playgroups).

Summer Total attending 321 (not including Nursery classes and playgroups).

May onwards Setting up work for PEEP Link. This will bring in attendance figures from Nursery classes and playgroups as well as the free-standing groups.

July New Link Visits Co-ordinator takes up post (joining the Level Co-ordinators' Team).

July Births on database (six months): 160.

Chapter 3

'Doing PEEP' is about what we did, and what happened. The memories are about all the levels 0s, 1s, 2s, 3s, 4s, and about story-telling in the First Schools; about the development of PEEP's principles and values; and about PEEP in groups and homes.

Five-year series of guidelines completed: for Babies, Ones, Twos and Threes, Fours
peep
How writing starts
Home-made books
The first pilot group
PERSONAL CHILD LEARNING RECORD
peep
After school Story Clubs with 'Reading Is Fundamental (RIF)'
READING IS FUNDAMENTAL
BOOK BOX
General parenting support issues (routines, tantrums etc) included in the programme

1995 1997 1997

Doing PEEP

3

I know only one way of finding out how far one can go and that is by setting out and getting there

HENRI BERGSON

1998 1999 2000

Chapter 3: Doing PEEP

SI remember the very first PEEP group there ever was. It was on Sept 28th 1995. We had spent months consulting, reading, visiting and planning what PEEP might offer; we hoped we had managed to persuade enough parents to come along at the appointed hour; and we had thought so carefully about what we would do at this first group. We felt very anxious indeed, because we knew that if they did not enjoy it and find it useful – those two things – they would not come again and then what would we do?

The group was supposed to start at 9.30. At 9.35 I was outside the building scanning the street for push-chairs. It seemed too awful that we would not even know whether what we had planned could work because there were no families with whom to give it a try! At 9.45, suddenly there were babies and push-chairs and siblings in all directions, and the programme had begun. But for many months afterwards the fear that no-one would come persisted, and we began to realise that the business of successfully recruiting families in the first place was to be one of the hardest and most crucial parts of the work we would be trying to do in the next five years.

SThinking back to the first year, some things stand out particularly.

The programme was organised into five modules, but at that time they were: Baby PEEP (0-12 months), Small PEEP (one- and two-year-olds), Big PEEP (three-year-olds), Nursery PEEP (four-year-olds) and School PEEP (five-year-olds upwards).

In September 1995, there were two pilot groups, one of babies and one of threes, with about eight families in each. The next term we opened six new Baby PEEP groups and six new Big PEEP groups. The records show that 217 children enrolled in the project in that first year.

The Yellow Book was important right from the start, although originally the contents were different, especially in the days before we had written any Guidelines. It started as a parent-held Child Learning Record (similar in concept to the red Child Health Record) with three pages recurring nine times a year: the 'Think of it this way' page, the 'Have you tried this?' page, and the 'How's it going ?' page. The 'Think of it this way' page contained the main idea in each guideline. The idea of the 'Have you tried this?' page developed into 'Things to do at home'; and the 'How's it going ?' page is now the Diary Page both in

the new publications and in the still existing Yellow Books. Parents' and carers' Diary Pages are evidence of their involvement in their children's learning, both for their own satisfaction and as evidence for OCN accreditation.

The group sessions were developed as the main weekly activity for families with children from birth to four years, and there were After-School Story Clubs too. These were run for Year One and Two children, their parents and staff, in association with Reading Is Fundamental (RIF).

Resources were a major investment, with a Special Book for each session and a wide range of carefully chosen and organised books (2,500 in this first year). Almost right from the start there were playpacks, and scrap resources for use at home.

The Guidelines were written to link with the content of the group sessions and the Yellow Book pages. There was also a plan to produce some 'general resource' Guidelines for use at any stage in the project, (eg Managing Young Children's Behaviour, Talking With Babies, Health and Safety for Young Children, Making and Using Puppets); but in the end these subjects were either brought into the program itself at a particular time, or the information offered to parents in another way.

Baby massage sessions were held once a term, acknowledging the importance of touch and bonding between mothers and babies as the context of very early language development. Although very warmly welcomed by some families, these sessions were eventually discontinued because it was not viable to make them available for all families. We realised that the answer could be a video about massage for babies and young children, and planned to make one, although to date we have not been successful in securing funding for this project.

Meetings with other providers were set up on a termly basis in the PEEP area, and were extremely useful in the early days as a way of keeping in touch with people and exchanging news, ideas and mutual support. They continued until 1998 when pressures on all providers resulted in such sparse attendance that they were discontinued, and alternative ways of keeping in contact were sought.

The Story Tent – a little camping tent bought very cheaply from a catalogue store – was a way of getting to know the different settings in the area and offering a literacy activity. It has been useful on numerous occasions since.

"From the beginning we knew, because everything we were doing was so new for us, we would have to take our reflective learning to the limit. This was going to apply as much to all the group leaders as to running the pilot groups where the programme was

developed. It felt like the only way to make sure that we continued to respond to parents' contributions and views, and so we needed some sort of mechanism for reflection. At the same time there was obviously a need for the leaders to keep in touch with the Centre in relation to each group and its needs week by week. So we decided to try 'Group Review Sheets' as a way of thinking about and discussing what was going on, and of addressing practical issues. These Review Sheets have been written by the Leaders after every group that PEEP has run for five years, amounting by now to thousands. We have learned so much from them, and indeed could learn so much more – about how a project develops over time, and how a group leader's ability to work reflectively develops with experience.

S I remembered being paired with a parent in a Baby Group during 'talk-time' as there was an uneven number of parents. We were asked to share something we'd done in the last two weeks that made us feel good. I looked at her and was about to say something when she burst into tears. She eventually told me that her partner had walked out on her and her three-month-old child the previous day. I just didn't know what to say so I gave here a big hug and stayed next to her throughout the session. I have seen her daughter (and subsequent son) grow up through baby and small (Ones and Twos) PEEP groups that I have assisted at since, and feel we have a special relationship.

Over the last two (?) years I have always dreaded this question being asked at the sessions as you never know what reaction you're going to get. I now think I should be careful what I ask as I never know what the answer might be!

S From the beginning I knew that PEEP had to be about *empowering* parents.
We had to get the balance right between offering parents information, and showing them what they already know and how important their role is. It was about getting them to see that *they* are the professional for their baby, not me. I remember the joy that came when parents realized their own capabilities and shared them.

S By September 1996 we had a range of 'Guidelines' available. Nine were needed for Nursery PEEP, and also for earlier stages of the 0-5 age range (eg Home-Made Books, Puppets, Saying Yes and Saying No, Cooking with Children, Traditional Games).

The titles linked explicitly with the content of the group sessions and Yellow Book pages, which we had already decided, and they were

Learning Together, Special People, Children's Friends, Talking with Children, Play Patterns, What comes Next?, Numbers Numbers Everywhere, Playing with Numbers, and Going Out.

Other linking titles in the planning stage were:

Learning from Television, Watching Together, Saying Yes and Saying No, Saying No Successfully, Saying Yes Most of the Time, Sharing Books Together, Making the Most of Favourite Stories, Helping Children to Love Books, Helping Children to Become Writers, Writing Games for Four-Year-Olds, Playing with Sounds and Rhymes, What Children Know about Books, Making Up stories With Children, Playing with Stories, Learning to be Strong, Real Progress Real Praise, and Helping Children Want to Learn.

Proposed titles that we thought could be available as a general resource at all times included:

Traditional Games, Managing Children's Behaviour, All About Letters, Starting Playgroup, Starting School, Sharing Books with Babies, Talking with Babies, Health and Safety for Young Children, Cooking with Children, Making and Using Puppets, and Home-Made Books

Now at last in 2000, we have managed to sort out all these titles and their content, and make sure that the session plans all match them. In the new publications it is the up-dated content of the old Guidelines that is at the heart of the programme – but back in 1996 all we had written were the very sparse Yellow Book pages, and we were making up session plans to go with them. The more explanatory Guidelines came later, after we had discussed the material at considerable length with the pilot group parents, the evaluation team and the group leaders.

S I remember going for the first time to a PEEP Group (having already done quite a bit of recruiting) and being pleased and relieved to see Mums who had been enrolled by me actually turning up and responding very positively. Plus a memory of how hard the floor is in Holy Family Church Hall, how skilfully and enjoyably the Leader ran the group, and how mesmerised the babies were by the book-sharing and by each other.

S It was late afternoon and my third home programme visit to a family who were unable to come to PEEP that term. I had just finished reading and sharing that week's session book – a book of Nursery Rhymes – with the mother and her baby. The baby's father was hovering in the doorway. I started to talk about perhaps borrowing a book when the baby's father chipped in, 'That book you

were reading just now, I would read a book like that to the children. It has got lots of funny rhymes in it.'

S The two-year-old sister of a child in Pegasus Nursery really enjoys circle times and joins in with great gusto. I distinctly remember when she first sang the Alphabet Song all the way through for the first time. She was sitting on her mum's lap singing the song word for word completely off-key and enjoying herself hugely.

Children, even at a very young age, seem to enjoy the Alphabet Song, particularly the actions. While singing the song children learn the letter names so quickly.

S Knowing parents and children in the group I felt a need to use books especially for them and I sometimes changed the story for one of my own. I had a struggle working to someone else's plan for the session and needed time to 'make it my own' each week. I think the project should invest as much as possible in 'big books'.

S Starting to run a group I felt scared. Can I do this? What will the parents be like? How should I react to things? How can I look confident and *be* confident? Am I wearing the right clothes? What shall I say? How can I break the ice and put parents at ease?

It *was* OK of course because the babies bonded us together and the practicalities overtook us eg babies sick, asleep, toddlers having tantrums. It might have helped to practise with other friendly adults first. Workshops were good for getting positive feedback and helpful suggestions eg reading stories and singing.

S I used to run an After-School Story Club at one of the First Schools. I loved doing Story Club at this school, it was a huge challenge, a real mixture of children many of whom found it almost impossible to sit still! I found their energy could be channelled into the story especially with active involvement in a dramatic and theatrical way, for example in the Anansi story I told. They became boys and girls in the village, or parents of children in the village. The unbridled excitement could be heard in the chorus of 'Have you brought a mask, have you brought a mask?' – each week. For me it was wonderful to be storytelling to children from very working-class and multi-cultural backgrounds. So often it is the middle-class schools who get this type of session because they can afford to. It really helped me to develop my stories and the children's involvement.

If there was the capacity PEEP would have been able to develop this wonderful resource – a link into schools with the continuation of

the art of story-telling and listening. It would have been wonderful to assess how the children who had attended PEEP sessions responded to Storyclubs as opposed to those children who hadn't!

S I remember being asked to assist at a Baby Massage Group for the first time – there were no siblings there so I could watch with joy as the parents and babies present learned and experimented with massage. I think that if PEEP organises other 'valuable activities' for parents and their children to enjoy – it keeps them keen and interested.

S I was really thrown in at the deep end with Story Telling. A Storyteller suddenly asked me to join their team as I'd been a teacher. It was at the beginning of the September term and seventy-five children turned up – them and me! (I had been told there would probably be twenty or so, with a maximum of thirty.) I took on my drama teacher role and started them off doing games and got them into the story corner. I read 'Where the Wild Things Are' – it was a very apt book and one of my favourites – and they all gallomphed around very happily. The Co-director was horrified when she heard what had happened and sorted it out. After this the Headteacher took half of the children who had come. All schools in area very different – doing Story Clubs was always a challenge. But I loved doing it!

S When I ran a small PEEP group (for one- and two-year-olds) a mum came up from Baby PEEP who had attended regularly. She approached me at the end of the session and I was sad to hear she hadn't been enjoying the sessions, she felt it was all too old for her child and talk time was too long. Her child couldn't do several of the actions during singing ie jumping and stamping; and got bored during talk time. I reassured that with help and time she would learn the actions. I persuaded her to keep coming. Soon she was trying to jump and stamp and when she finally managed to do it on her own her Mum was absolutely thrilled and we gave her a clap.

We must never stop listening to parents. You can accommodate and reassure most needs and still keep the group happy.

S I remember very clearly my first day as a group leader. It was Monday morning and my first group Canaries. It was quite a large group, twelve mums and children. I was so nervous, my throat felt like someone had their hands around it. My hands shook, and I thought 'Will I be able to do this well?' At the end of the session when I was saying goodbye to parents several said 'I really enjoyed that',

'See you next week' or 'He loved the singing'. I was so elated. I'd done it, the parents had enjoyed the session, and they wanted to come back.

S I shall always remember going to my first group. I think it would be a very good idea for new group leaders to be put into a group to see how and what you have to do for at least a month. It would be wonderful to be given time and help, watching a particular group and going to a few as all groups run in their own way.

S Chaffinches wasn't my first PEEP group, but the one that I remember particularly. A strong group of about five-six parents had moved up from a baby group. I felt I was the stranger coming to this group and I had to tread very carefully. I remember the children were my focus for the first couple of weeks.

This group of parents/children stayed with me for two whole years. I realised that PEEP groups are not like a school setting, and group leaders are not there to teach. These groups belong to the parents.

S Doing PEEP training and other courses with other local parents has meant that our children have become friends. I wouldn't have dreamt of using books with my baby at three – four months. I really enjoyed sharing books, I wouldn't have believed you could have a response from a twelve-week-old. When she was having her eight-month check and the Health Visitor gave me my Book Start pack I said 'I've already got this one. I go to PEEP.' Her face fell. 'I wouldn't miss it,' I said. 'I go every week.'

It's taught me not to be afraid of teaching her things. I don't think, 'Oh, she's too young.' If we try something and she can't do it I adapt it to her level if I can.

S My partner and I first took our daughter to PEEP when she was four weeks old and attended Baby PEEP regularly, my partner continuing to take her after I returned to work. As a new parent, PEEP was great for getting to know other parents in the neighbourhood. We would walk back home across the field behind the Rose Hill Family Centre after sessions and exchange phone numbers and addresses. In the summer holiday, we continued meeting in each other's homes once a week on a rota basis and (after some hesitation) made it a regular feature that we sang some PEEP songs.

PEEP sessions were also sometimes like a breast-feeding clinic as several of us struggled to get it right. We learned lots of things to do with our babies, but especially the songs made a difference.

A negative element of building our network was that we were perhaps not so open to involving parents who joined with younger babies, as ours grew older. Also, we were a mainly middle class/ upper working class group and this may have off-put other parents. (However, *all* the regular attenders did take part in our summer holidays meetings. It was after we had 'bonded' that it may have made it harder for others to join in.) I feel we should actively encourage networking between parents but make sure no-one gets left out.

S July 2000, four years and quite a few recruitment visits later, I undertook the first Link Visit. By now I knew that most families who agree to let us in through the door will be welcoming and open to hear what we bring. What I really remember from this visit is learning very quickly that my expectation of how the child would play with my home-made dough, and the reality, were very different. He was *much* more interested in the small board I took as a play surface – which was not suitable as a play object. In general this visit felt much more challenging than a recruitment visit, perhaps because the expected outcome was less concretely defined. I do remember a real sense of achievement having 'done' the book share and the activity (he made hand-prints in the dough once his mum had helped distract him from the board). Also I had a sense that something which had been a plan, a project, a *theoretical* entity – a Link visit – was now actually *happening*.

S I remember the feeling in the room at the Family Centre in Rose Hill where I led Nuthatches. Although we had awkward tables and computers the room was compact and sunny, and I remember such very different mothers and babies struggling to get to sessions and then unwrapping their babies and placing them proudly/nervously on the rug in the middle of the circle.

S This is a memory of my first group, called Puffins. It was a group for Threes. I had visited two groups before I started and felt the correct PEEP thing to do was to have people sitting on the floor – so I pushed the comfortable chairs to the side of the room, spread out the pink candlewick blanket and invited the mums to sit down. I struggled through the admin, introducing a new idea (from our recent training) of introducing in pairs. Finally, running out of steam, we started circle time. I had worked in a local nursery for many years and was used to raising half an eyebrow for everyone in the group to listen quietly – not so in PEEP. The children disappeared under the pink blanket, pretending it was a bed and then all got under together

– the effect was of boiling pink porridge while I struggled manfully on. At the end of the session one of the mums came up to me and said, 'Will we have a talking time, next week, like we used to in Small PEEP?'

I thought I'd done a talking-time, it had taken me hours to prepare – I staggered back to the PEEP Centre feeling a total failure and they asked me how it had gone. My final memory of that morning is of a group of PEEP staff standing round the photocopier, howling with laughter (in a *totally* sympathetic way) while I told my story. Puffins became my favourite group – we started sitting on the chairs as a response to the PEEP questionnaire 'What *don't* you like?' – and the whole group said 'Sitting on the floor'.

This particular session was one that I did with Doves midway through my first term. I'd been working hard to establish myself and develop a relationship with this very strong group. (I just *wasn't* the previous Group Leader!). Sessions had been getting progressively better, my nerves were abating and I was remembering all the songs – but I still had the sense that there was much more I had to crack, and I hadn't managed a big inspiring moment either for myself or the group.

Then came 'So Much'. This was a session book that on first reading seemed a little daunting and rather too much for babies. But I read and re-read it at home and started the session with high hopes. We'd had a good talking time, the singing had gone well and it was time for the story. I took a deep breath and began. At the second page I had almost all eyes on me and the book, and by the fourth several babies had crawled up for a closer look. By the time I'd reached page six I had two sitting on my knees looking intently from the book to my face and one crawling over my back to look over my shoulder. There was definitely a different energy in the group at that moment – and things began to gel from there on. I was so moved by the experience that it was impossible not to share it with the group, and I think everyone was inspired by the babies' interest in this lovely book.

At the end of that session I felt I'd landed. I'd finally begun to relax and enjoy my work, and I knew without doubt that this was where I wanted to be. It taught me never to under-estimate anyone, adults or children; and not to be afraid to take risks and show my feelings when it matters most.

Working in Small PEEP groups (Ones – Threes) was so satisfying. I watched these tiny children developing confidence to leave their parents' sides, to come and listen to the story, to join in singing

and activities. The moment they knew the songs so well that they could pick out sentences and words, they joined in with relish. It was hard learning to focus on both the children's and the parents' needs, learning the ability to really 'listen' to the children and parents and not be patronising. I learnt how to work with the different and diverse needs of this wide age range, mainly by making the stories and songs full of action and involvement. It was great at the Dovecote because the colourful collage of animals could often be used in conjunction with the songs and stories.

I believe this sort of early years education should be available to all, but most especially to those families who wouldn't normally have the confidence, incentive or desire to take their babies and young children to song and story sessions, or to a place where they can have their skills and interests as parents validated and encouraged. And we learnt in the end that Small PEEP needed to have a smaller age range, so that the one-year-olds had a different input to the two- and nearly three-year-olds!

S Working in the Centre I don't usually go to groups, but sometimes I help out in a crisis. The first group I attended – a group for Twos in the Dovecote – the Group Leader was off, so the Group Assistant was acting Group Leader, and I was acting Group Assistant. The Group was just as I had imagined from seeing the PEEP video and hearing about PEEP – fun, welcoming (especially to one mother who was new – she had moved to Blackbird Leys a few weeks earlier but didn't know anyone yet) and the children seemed to really enjoy it. It was interesting to see the registers that I help prepare actually being used. I was grateful that the child in my care didn't start crying uncontrollably! I think it would be good if all non-group staff could attend a group about once a term.

S There was a bit of a face-to-face with a parent at Rose Hill Family Centre. She didn't want to leave the room while a PEEP session was going on – but did not want to join in either. We had a lengthy discussion about why, and what PEEP is all about. The parent said what she thought of PEEP, ie upper class, a bit church-type, and a few more comments. I encouraged this parent to stay for a session, and eighteen months later this family is still coming to PEEP. What a result. If we can get just one parent to come to PEEP who was, to say the least, unsure, perhaps we are on a winning streak.

F My partner was involved as a PEEP parent too, and took our daughter to PEEP on his own after I returned to work. He was

C2

often at a loss for things to do as a father looking after a baby, as all the local activities (baby groups) seemed to be aimed at or be attended by mothers only.

PEEP was similar, but they made him feel welcome as a father and he enjoyed going. But he still felt unconfident of activities to do with our daughter. He chatted to the group leader and she said, 'No one ever played with you as a kid, did they?' This made him quite sad as he realized what he had missed out on in his own childhood. From then on PEEP was very important to him.

PEEP needs to make space for dads!

F My first memory of PEEP was 'Baby' PEEP run by the Level Co-ordinator. How much she enjoyed taking the sessions and the enthusiasm she showed every week. Even when babies of twelve weeks were attending whose only recognition is to sit and stare.

F After doing PEEP for a term I was sad to have to return to full-time work and not be able to carry on with the project. Every season I would ask whether or not evening or weekend PEEP groups were available but sadly not. I was sent some of the next term's programme and as much as possible I have continued the PEEP spirit. PEEP should keep in touch with PEEP parents and their children.

S In January this year another Group Leader was absent, so I was asked to do some extra sessions. I worked at three levels for several weeks (Baby, Ones and Twos). How can I, I'll get muddled, I don't know the groups. It was fantastic, the parents, the children were so welcoming, we laughed so much (we do it like this usually!), I met so many wonderful parents and all the Group Assistants were patient and supportive.

PEEP parents and assistants are all part of the 'PEEP team'. Being supportive is circular. Taking risks in a supportive system is great – you need to listen and be open to being supported, learn a huge amount from all the new people you meet and the new experiences you have and about yourself and what can be possible.

S I had worked as a Baby Group Leader for about six months. After book sharing time a baby of one year and a few days stared at the book box while we started to sing. He wriggled across the room to it, pulled himself up a chair leg and reached into the box. He carefully lifted out several books, then some more. With a gurgle of glee he lifted out the book his mother had returned having borrowed it the previous week, which his mother had said he'd loved.

He wriggled back to his mum holding the book, sat down and started to clap the actions to Pat a Cake. Having got what he wanted he was ready to join the group again. His mum was almost in tears of pride (and astonishment). When we finished the song we all gave him a clap for knowing what he wanted and being so determined to get it!

We shouldn't ever underestimate a child's ability to make decisions. This mother had older children, she said they had difficulty with reading and writing at school. She said 'Wow PEEP does change what children can do'. She had never missed a session and still two years later is a very keen PEEPer.

SI used to do story-telling for PEEP. There was a large group, in a large hall. Only minimum help had arrived from staff of the school. In addition one little fella determined to give the visitor a hard time. 'That's what he's here for isn't it?' was the sort of comment while he fidgeted, doing his utmost to disconcert me. I started a well-known story about a mouse and a mandolin. Gradually the hall became silent. I glanced at my tormentor. He was sitting still, listening, captivated. If I ever doubted the power of a good story here was the real proof.

SI used to tell stories in the Home Corner, but remember finding it difficult one day to get to it, the children were so pleased to see me. We talked about last week's stories, and the children were eager for today's. They gave it the most rapt attention – except for one little girl who was fast asleep.

SI remember the moment (in a discussion in the Centre) when for the first time I perceived Link and Groups as two mutually dependent parts of one delivery of PEEP (rather than an up-dated version of Network PEEP, which was always conceived as a minor 'better-than-nothing' alternative).

SI remember Small PEEP dividing into two, and some of the issues we discussed at that time. The first cohort of PEEP babies and their parents who had joined the project in Jan '96 and who had stayed in PEEP, came to the end of the first two-year cycle of Small PEEP. It was a suitable time to review the original decision to keep one- and two-year-olds in the same groups, and to listen carefully to the views of parents and group leaders. From consultations in parent user groups and in general talking time in the sessions, a number of concerns were raised. Splitting the two levels had implications for the curriculum group (a lot of work to get it right), for programme

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delivery, for group distribution and group leader workload, and for suitability of premises. But from parents' concerns and from our own perspectives as well it was quite clear that we had to make the change. The huge range of developmental rates from babies just after their first birthday to young children nearly three and ready for playgroup was much too wide to be managed within one sort of group – especially with the likelihood of siblings of any age in addition.

F This is a very recent memory – but one that will stay with me for a very long time. We'd borrowed 'The Big Red Bus' because it was a book about a vehicle (my son is very keen on books about vehicles at the moment). Then after we read it a few times, he ran to find his PEEP tape and said there was a song on the tape about the same bus, so we played the tape and found the song. It had never occurred to me to make a connection about the song and book, but it made the book so much more 'real' to him when he found/remembered the song. Although the book has been returned we sing the song all the time (in fact he remembers all the words) and every time we sing the song he tells me it's a very special song because someone made a book about it!

F We were doing a PEEP Ones group and the leader had got some margarine tubs she was using to build a chimney/tower with. Then when she began to sing 'I'm going to build a chimney' all the children got very excited and crowded round her as they wanted to knock it down, so she let one of the children knock it down. Then she began to rebuild the chimney and began singing the song again. This time the chimney was knocked down much quicker and the children got even more excited. All the mums began to laugh as there was no way she was going to be able to finish building the chimney. Each of the children had a turn knocking down the chimney, by the end the chimney only got two tubs high. However we all really enjoyed the activity and all the mums had a good laugh.

Diary

1995

September Outline of programme decided and first Yellow Book

pages planned.

September Decision to name groups after birds, eg 'Swallows, 'Linnets', 'Doves'.

October First two weekly pilot groups begin, one for babies (Swallows) and one for threes (Swifts).

November First school based volunteer working party to help with making resources.

1996

January Six more Baby groups and six more Big PEEP groups (for Threes).

September PEEP Alphabet pilot started.

A 'schematic ' alphabet brings the project's work on phonology and letter recognition into the context of children's most fundamental interests and concerns.

September Audio-tapes and written copies of the PEEP songs and rhymes for each year are given to parents as part of the programme.

September Sixteen groups this term.

September PEEP mothers and babies can attend a 'How to Massage Your Baby' session run by a qualified massage therapist.

September Peep offers weekly Story Clubs for Year One and Two children, parents and staff in all the First Schools in the PEEP area. Currently there are six running, with approximately thirty children in each. This is in association with the RIF (Reading is Fundamental) Project, which gives children three books a year of their own choice to take home and keep.

September – May Throughout this period from September 96 onwards, programme development continued at the Small and Nursery levels, including the drafting and piloting of eighteen 'Guidelines' and accompanying Yellow Book pages, and three sets of Alphabet Games.

October Appointments with all Nursery teachers this week and next. All would like PEEP sessions next term.

October Big PEEP is increasingly being incorporated into playgroup sessions.

It is hoped that Nursery PEEP will develop in the same way. (Nursery PEEP is currently being piloted in the Nursery Class of one of the First Schools.)

October Blackbird Leys Family Support Group Coffee morning.

November We need a Guideline about the value of play in relation to learning; and parents have asked for the ORIM Guideline to be incorporated into the Yellow Book from the start.

November Training for new Home visitors.

November PEEP mother who is a Nursery teacher doing written material (alphabet activities this week): focus on 'why' as well as 'what'.

November Meeting with staff at Lawn Upton Middle School on characteristics of non-readers.

November INSET at St. John Fisher provided by Co-director – session on 'Play' and implications for PEEP in integrated (Special Needs) Nursery setting.

November Consultation meeting with Wrens parents very useful. Issues:

Big PEEP parents at playgroups might be thinking that PEEP takes their children out of playgroup for which they have paid.

Very positive response to group sessions as mode of delivery, although thought home visits might be a good alternative if needed – not preferable though.

We need to reassure parents about loss/damage to resources: we would rather they were used and possibly damaged, than not used in case of damage.

December Pre-School Groups Co-ordinator appointed, to start in January.

1997

January In the Pegasus pilot, a very important talking time about explaining *why* certain books are part of the programme, and why we suggest certain things.

January Five new Nursery PEEPs started – all the remaining First Schools. Nursery pilot group continues, one term ahead. (Groups now in all playgroups and Nursery classes in the area.)

January Sixteen new groups this term, making thirty-two groups in all: families recruited with home visits, staff appointed and trained, resources ready (books, playpacks, written materials), premises organised.

January Maximum eighteen on roll instead of twelve: implications for Group Leaders.

Guidelines to be written this term allocated to two external colleagues and Co-director for first draft.

January 'Curriculum Map' for all four levels/five years.

January Discussions in team about the gap in current provision in the area of support for parenting problems at an early stage (essentially preventive work). PEEP advocates talking and playing with children; the tensions and conflicts generated by sleep, eating and behaviour management problems get in the way of talking and

playing together. Is this something we could / should be trying to address in PEEP? Several alternative/complementary possibilities discussed; agreed important to address issue.

February Complete review of written materials to ensure they are developmentally appropriate.

Fabrusry Focus on long term sustainability and transferability.

March Preparations for second expansion of groups next term (ten new).

April Forty-two PEEP groups in twenty-one venues, every week in term time with trained Group Leaders and Assistants.

April PEEP now running groups in all playgroups; and both morning and afternoon in all Nursery classes in the PEEP area. Story Clubs and RIF continues in all schools.

April Level Co-ordinators (from the Group Leader team) start one day a week.

April start of on-going process of translating core PEEP materials, initially into Urdu, Bengali, and Chinese.

May 'Big PEEP' games written.

July Library Day, in Peers Community Library and Blackbird Leys Library and the PEEP Centre: Story-telling, borrowing and activities.

July 'Holiday PEEP' began.

September Whole staff training day about working with parents, with staff from the Pen Green Centre, Corby.

September Group leaders training: ground rules in groups, introducing PEEP to parents, follow-up visits.

October Story Tellers meeting for review and to organise remaining five RIF Book Distributions.

October Open College Networks application submitted for PEEP parents' accreditation. Panel on Nov 4th: implications for Group Leaders' role in relation to OCN.

October Equal Opportunities Policy work.

November Parent User Groups.

December Nursery Level review.

1998

January PEEP Learning Bridge started.

January Pilot Group: we need to sort out the 'PEEP line' on a variety of frequent but complex issues, and agree a form of words with Group Leaders for them, eg smacking, shouting at children.

February Work on first sets of Baby Guidelines and Baby Games; project working towards complete sets of Guidelines and games for each term at all levels.

March Managing/carrying on in aftermath of fire in February.

The project enormously grateful to the LEA for its support during this crisis, and for enabling the renovation to take place inside one month.

March Planning and groundwork re new Nursery PEEP model; this maximises PEEP's work in laying the foundations for the relationship between schools and parents about children's learning (for implementation in September).

April Equal opportunities work:
Accessibility of materials reviewed on the basis of feedback from group leaders
Training re creating a welcoming atmosphere within groups to all
Pack and book borrowing open to all in nurseries and playgroups (not just those enrolled in PEEP)
Development of Network PEEP
Training for group leaders on bi-lingual families and book sharing / use of resources.

April Review of delivery is a dynamic process, which is discussed through level meetings held four times a term. Through these and training sessions for group staff a number of key issues have been addressed:
Strategies to increase retention at Baby Level.
Meeting the needs of families in Small PEEP, splitting the current two-year span groups into separate levels, for one-year-olds and two-year-olds.
Refining the session plans to include suggested activities for talking time with adults on guideline material
Introducing Baby PEEP at Home
Increasing support for group staff
Bilingual support work in groups.

April One term of Director in Nursery Level co-ordination plus Group Leader role.

May Translators in groups for adults with no English.

September Change in the management structure for the delivery of the programme, whereby Baby and Small PEEP were separated from Big and Nursery PEEP. The next two terms represent a period of comparative stability, with a constant number of groups in each level: Nursery PEEP in all six First Schools in the area, plus eleven Big, fourteen Small and ten Baby groups.

September Baby level pilot of Network PEEP.

September Planning Small PEEP split into PEEP for Ones and PEEP for Twos.

September New model of Nursery PEEP, with Nursery teachers trained as PEEP Leaders and PEEP Nursery teachers covering in the Nursery

classes while teachers work with parents. Foundation of home-school partnership. (NB only four days' cover a term provided by PEEP proved inadequate – EAZ funding of one day a week in Sept '99 enabled Nursery staff to do home-school/PEEP work thoroughly.)

September At Baby level, increasing emphasis on how different ways of presenting Guideline material has actually worked in groups. Ideas are collected on group review sheets.

1999

April PEEP Handbook finalised and in full use; regular review process in place.

September Two more schools (in EAZ area outside PEEP area) join Nursery PEEP.

September onwards Sure Start and PEEP working relationship for Baby, Small and Big Levels (0 – 3s). PEEP staff on Sure Start Steering Group, and on Working Groups for Management Development, Buildings, Health and Home Visiting, Community Initiatives, Equal Opportunities and Children's Learning and Care.

September onwards Deputy Director working on planning for Sure Start Playroom and Creche in new Sure Start Family Centre.

December Nursery children also defined as reception children: dilemma at Nursery level.

2000

January In PEEP for Threes and Fours: strategies for involving more parents and carers as well as staff in settings.

January Major progress on Link planning in SMT.

February – July Concentrated Curriculum Group work to prepare material for publication: involving all Levels Guidelines, PEEP at Homes, Songs and Rhymes and Song Books. New material written for 'Getting Started', 'Summary' and 'Where to go for help' pages. Also acknowledgements etc. Commissioning illustrations and setting up photograph days also a major part of the Curriculum Group's work.

February Review of equal opportunities in practice.

May All day SMT meeting re dissemination in Phase Two.

May Sure Start Visitors Day at PEEP: to review and consolidate on-going relationship between PEEP and Sure Start staff for mutual support in development and implementation.

May Group Leader training on curriculum overview.

July New 'Welcome to PEEP' card and song tape produced.

May 'Learning Together with Fours' material sent out widely for consultation and follow-up meetings.

July First-ever Link Visit.

Chapter 4

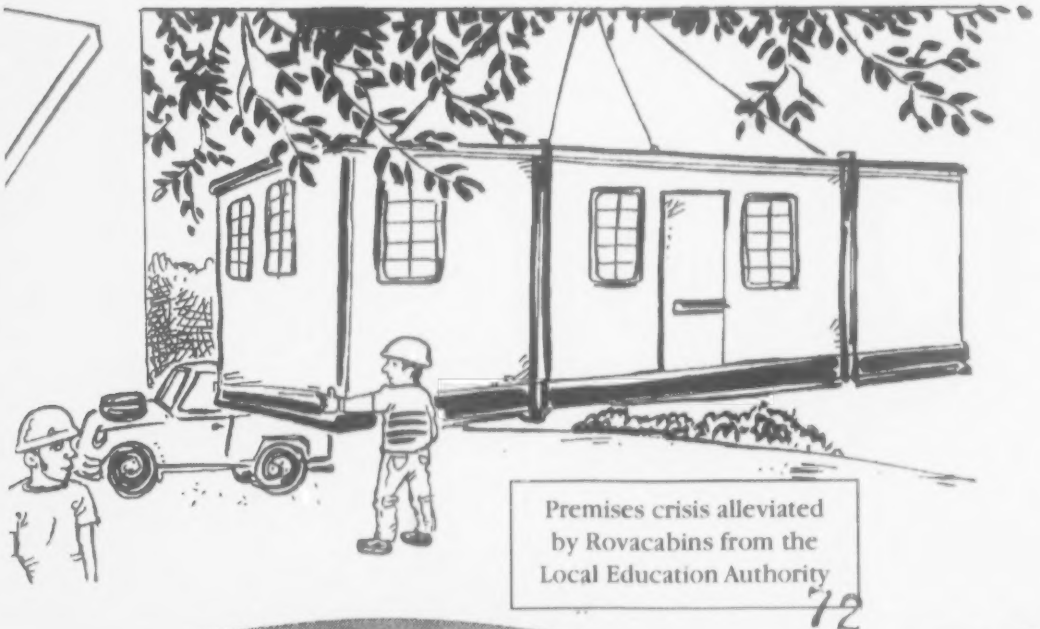
'Things PEEP Needed' is the chapter about resources for an early literacy programme. The first part of the chapter, 4A, is about the resources used in groups and at home, especially books, play-packs and good quality scrap; and about essential systems and equipment. The second section, 4B, is about premises. And last but not least, 4C is about the finance and funding.

Logo by Sarah Garland
Original PEEP Centre, in a spare classroom at Windale First School
WINDALE FIRST SCHOOL
peep
Overworked photocopier!
The Story Tent

Things PEEP needed 4

Priority is a function of context

STEPHEN COREY



1998 1999 2000

Chapter 4: Things PEEP needed

4A: Resources, equipment and systems

On a day-to-day level, there is a constant awareness, amongst PEEP staff and volunteers (as no doubt in many other charitably-funded organisations) of the need to make savings wherever possible – to 'waste not, want not'. To this end, catalogues and shops are thoroughly scoured, seeking out items that represent the best value for money – trying to achieve the balance of high quality with low cost. The Resources staff in particular must dream 'Will it be safe in the hands of a two-year-old? The mouth of a baby? Is it durable? Washable? Attractive? Repairable? Adaptable? Can we buy spare parts to fix it ourselves, rather than replacing the whole item? Could we make it ourselves?'

I went with the others to the multicultural resource centre in London for puzzles and books – especially books with lots of dialogue and to get more good ideas. Lots of musical instruments and puppets made out of hessian. We all arrived by train and they gave us a cup of coffee when we got there. All our senses were focused. We were really trying to get the best out of that trip. The books were rather too old. But for ideas for making things it was superb – especially puppets and instruments.

I was doing some re-organisation of our computer File Server Directory with the Resources and Systems Co-ordinator – of guidelines and 'standard' forms.

I suddenly realised just how many forms and documents (for groups, OCN, recruitment, admin, staff issues, premises, resources etc) PEEP needs to operate effectively, and how these had changed and multiplied over the years. We needed to organise them efficiently so that the most recent version could be found both on the Server and as a hard copy.

I decided that we should give each such form/document a version number (eg in small print at bottom left corner: VN3) and keep a copy of the latest version in the relevant 'Originals' folder. This would improve consistency, and save time – all that's needed now is the time to make the changes .....

O I'd been volunteering for PEEP for several years, and one day it was decided to analyse the content of all the books in PEEP's 'lending library'. An A4 analysis sheet was prepared. It had all sorts of headings such as 'Issues!', 'Images', 'Literacy' , 'Numeracy' etc. In the following two terms I read, analysed and recorded almost all of the 1000+ books. The Resources Assistant later entered them into a database to be accessed by anyone looking for a book with certain specific images or issues. It was fascinating to me because my previous experience had been with books for children of school age.

I think this sheet could be reviewed from time to time, though it's very comprehensive. It needs a section to cover the 'reference' books.

S My first contact with PEEP was at a volunteers' meeting in 1995. I met some of the PEEP staff at Windale School and was struck by the amount of 'stuff' stacked everywhere! Plastic boxes, children's books spread over tables and shelves and an atmosphere that buzzed with activity, excitement and (I think I detected) slight panic! The Resources staff talked to us about the ideas behind the play pack, what needed to be done and by when (yesterday I think!) I left with a bag of bits, patterns and instructions (and a sense of beginning something bigger), to make some little white doctor's coats to go into a pack with a stethoscope and 'Looking through the window'. Such was my enthusiasm and excitement that I made the coats straight away (most unlike me – I usually leave things much closer to the deadline!)

Two days later my life turned upside down as my husband was taken into hospital in London for an emergency operation. As the next two months passed I lost my link with PEEP and remember feeling a sense of disappointment until the Co-director phoned just before Easter to ask if I'd like to do the PEEP training in the Summer Term. I enjoyed it so much and was so inspired by all those involved – and especially the story telling! I started running two groups for PEEP in the following Autumn Term '96 and the rest (as they say) is history!

I realise now how important it is to draw on people's energy and enthusiasm, trust your instincts and not to give up on people if their lives wobble slightly at a crucial moment – thank you PEEP.

S I remember recording dual language tapes with a colleague from the Asian community. We were at my home. We recorded 'Kipper' and 'Owl Babies' and 'Dear Zoo' in Panjabi. This is spoken by many Bangladeshi people living in Oxford. We had a great time trying

to find the right sort of sound effects to go with all Kipper's actions as he looked around for a comfortable place to be. She translated as she went – nothing of course was written down so she was translating from the English straight into the microphone. We giggled a lot and had to redo quite a lot because she needed to get the right meaning for the words.

This was in total contrast to my experience later in the term when I took a friend to a recording studio to read the given translation of 'Peace at Last' in Hindi Panjabi into the microphone. Straightforward, one might think. But not at all. Half way into it, he put the book down in exasperation. 'This makes no sense – it is not about this story, it is too literal, even the wrong words have been used!' So we abandoned it.

It made me realise we should not always rely on the official translations in picture books. We need to get a few ideas for translating and always double-check the translated version with a person who knows the language.

S I remember taking boxes of Nursery PEEP Guidelines and materials round to schools, transporting them on the little 'trolley' and trying to keep them in place. But the whole load shot off as I hit a kerb. If anyone was watching, I wonder what they thought I was doing? PEEP is quite hard work, physically! Is there an easier way to transport these boxes I wonder?!

S We always thought it was important to make sure children have their own books, and we started by offering a session book at half price each term. That got very complicated and we had quite a lot of spare session books so then we did a free book every term. Now they are nearly gone but we hope to start a new system where we send a birthday book at the same time as the birthday card – if we can get the funding .....

S In 1996 we wrote a rationale for our PEEP resources for families to borrow. It began 'Children learn to read by reading'. This statement was the starting point for PEEP's investment in books for families to have at home. We also used to offer special books at the end of term, at half price. We did not continue that – it was a bit of a disaster from the organisational point of view. And imagine the additional tasks for the group leaders having to collect all the money. But the parents loved it.

Diary

Resources, equipment and systems

1995

September Project assistant begins designing playpacks.
October Computers selected and delivered.
November Basic database designed, to be in use Jan 96.
November First Resources Volunteers Meeting.

1996

September 198 playpacks are available on loan to families, and 234 baby packs.

Playpacks contain a book, and an item related to the book, which is designed to support activities for parents and children together at home. Items include dressing-up clothes, puppets, games and relevant toys (eg a dumper truck with a book about diggers, or a bug bottle with a book about ladybirds).

A playpacks Workshop was run for playgroup and nursery staff.

Project has purchased over 2,500 books. Almost all in paperback and mainly for borrowing – all carefully chosen according to criteria in relation to content (especially positive images), design and quality.

September Scrap scoop! Scrap now used widely as a resource for both parents and pre-school settings.

October Scrap workshop. Ten people plus us, very useful in itself and also as an opening for discussing ideas for Big (Threes) and Nursery (Fours) PEEP. Guideline to be written; next Workshop about activities connected with PEEP alphabet.

October Story Tent in use – other providers putting it up themselves and is used in a variety of settings, indoors and out.

November Backlog of data input.

November Administrator to SAGE (payroll) training.

November Management team meetings re recording project work, esp. feedback sheets for groups and home visits, and a questionnaire for use with parents.

November Book selection criteria completed.

November Lovely new leaflet with PEEP logo.

November PEEP staff visit to Children's Book Trust to select titles.

November Open College Networks Recognition panel agreed PEEP '97 with accreditation.

December Preparation for Jan expansion of groups completed; resources

for sixteen new groups ready (books, playpacks, written materials).

1997

January Sorting out new computer arrangements ready for new term; implications for office layout plus good in-tray system really needed for better all-round communication.

January Management Team meeting re computer training plans, office issues, timing of data-entry pressure, data analysis in the project.

January Activity at Centre all week organising materials and photocopying.

January Two staff doing overtime, to get reproduction of material sorted. Photocopier still broken; spin-off is discovery that Peers School can offer gadgetry and support (generally better and faster equipment).

April Start of on-going process of translating core PEEP materials, initially into Urdu, Bengali and Chinese.

April Major review of systems as result of expansion, including evaluation issues, data collection, staff management, organisation of curriculum material, monitoring, external links. Also major review of machines – computers (both hardware and software), photocopier, security systems.

May Various new management systems in operation for staff, curriculum and resources as result of January and April expansions.

May Computer network, server and technical support set up.

June Second scrap workshop.

June Planning for PEEP video.

October Book week: PEEP exhibition at Macclesfield House.

October New admin procedures needed for high take-up of OCN accreditation by parents/carers.

November Filming week for the PEEP video.

December Video editing complete.

1998

January Video copies ready for distribution to new parents/carers; also available for sale to other providers and people interested in the project.

January New Resources Assistant takes up post.

February Fire at the PEEP Centre (arson attack). Moved out (into spare classroom about to be demolished) for complete refurbishment of Centre. Need to clean or replace practically every item belonging to PEEP.

March Early discussions re long-term production of resources.

April Development of bi-lingual materials and story tapes, and translation arrangements for Guidelines.

April Books being catalogued so that group leaders can request specific

topics, interests or images.
May 'PEEP At Home' materials developed.

1999

September Extended Resources Library.
September Nursery PEEP resources in two more First Schools.
September Work on new publications started: project continuing until end 2000.
October Training Library additions.
October Plan for possible Birthday Books as part of PEEP Link (dependent on funding).
November Nursery Level meeting about need for more packs and books in schools due to high borrowing rates.
December Appointed designer for new publications.
December Millennium compliance work.

2000

January Extension of ICT equipment to meet needs of staff.
January Consulted Open University (Boars Hill campus) re Getting Started pages in new publications.
February Meeting with designers resulted in decision to terminate our agreement with them and abandon original concept.
March Photography session for Babies and Ones publications.
April Appointed new designers for publications. One month lost.
May Photography session for Twos and Threes for publications.
May First items finally sent off to printers: binder covers, welcome card, tape inserts, colour pages.
May Further up-dating and extending of Resources Library.
June Data collection systems for Link.
June Discussions re PEEP web site.
July Final photography session for Nursery Alphabet Games.
July First batch of publications delivered to Centre.
July Stock rotation system in place for publications.

4B: Premises

Centres, offices, training premises, group venues

I'm sure I shall remember for ever our efforts (fruitless so far) to get staff under the same roof! An associated challenge is keeping staff updated on information in general.

Looking back on the weeks following the fire, the main issues seemed to have been:

- managing our own – and colleagues' and parents' – 'emotional' responses
- keeping the programme going
- establishing what is lost and what is cleanable
- dealing with loss adjuster and insurers
- dealing with contractors and others (builders, plumbers, electricians, flooring contractors, decorators and telephones, alarm system, computers, Peers School premises people etc)
- keeping up the long-term perspectives (including the major funding proposal) in the midst of many other urgent and important demands
- replacing lost equipment, resources etc.

The LEA was completely helpful, and we were back in the Centre in four weeks.

"When I arrived for my first session after the fire (I am a volunteer), I remember the smell and the feel of the damaged items I was dealing with. I remember feeling quite angry with the person who had set the fire because of the wanton destruction of the work of dedicated staff. I felt that the person should have done some community service in recompense but the courts decided differently. I talked to several PEEP staff in the weeks following. None was judgmental nor did anyone seem angry – all just got on with the job and I found that a) remarkable and b) commendable. It was a lesson for me and when the Centre re-opened many improvements had been made.

"I walked into the PEEP Centre, and I felt angry and upset all at once, everything black with smoke and it stank. I expected all groups to be cancelled. But no, there was the Groups Co-ordinator wiping down my register – she said 'It's a bit grotty but you will have a new one next week.' Everyone pulled together and worked hard to keep everything going.

"After the arson attack the PEEP office premises were a bleak sight. But what was so heartening was how little people were disheartened – they all just got on with business as usual, moved into temporary rooms, refused to let it get them down.

"Arrival of PEEP Cabins and consequent re-organisation of PEEP Centre and offices is a very particular memory. The cabins were delivered on the back of a lorry, and they were too wide to fit through the gate, so the brick gateposts had to be pulled down and re-built. There were various other technical problems and delays –

especially with the installation of the phone system in the Cabins. I do remember several of us lugging the heavy wooden cupboard from the Yellow Room in the Halliday Building. We had to get it down to the 'courtyard' in the Centre, before it was taken by the school caretakers to the Cabins.

On-going thoughts about space allocation ... the general situation (in the PEEP Centre, Cabins and Offices) is like trying to cram more and more toys into a fuller and fuller toy box, and hoping the lid won't fly off!

SI remember despair at seeing time fly past when I was unable to do my job properly with no computer or telephone in the cabins.

SWhen I joined PEEP in May, I 'borrowed' a group leader's/Level Co-ordinators' desk in the Centre while the Administrator organised phone and computer systems to enable me to move into my office in the cabins. Things moved slowly as we were dependent on external suppliers but this suited me as it made it a lot easier for me to get to know people, have informal meetings and settle in. The group leaders were patient, but I'm sure it didn't suit them to lose their desk!

Eventually I psyched myself up for the move and the computer was installed and it was ready for me to move in. I decided just to do it with no big announcement. As space was so short, my office (and the future National Development Officer's) were frequently used to store creche toys, the mop and Hoover, and buggies during groups. On the morning of my move, I looked in the office and it had been cleared out. I thought 'Great it's ready'. By the afternoon, when I returned to move in, it was full again with toys, cleaning stuff and buggies as another group was in session.

The long-suffering group leader came along and must have seen my annoyance in my face as I moved the buggy out into the hallway. Later I realised how frustrated *she* must have been, as she had had to manage for a whole term without a desk in the Centre as well as clearing space to run her group all the time, and here was I with a brand new office!

OI remember getting back into the Centre after the fire. The fire had been *so* awful, and it was horrible working in the temporary accommodation and trying to carry on as normal despite the chaos and pressure. I remember organising the first OCN fair (the big one with over 100 certificates to give out) from that temporary accommodation – it was just days after the fire I think. And then the

research beginning despite the previous field-worker's sudden resignation felt like a real triumph.

S I recall, having worked for PEEP for only one month, a telephone call from the Director telling me there had been a fire at the PEEP Centre. I will never forget the smell of the smoke left in the building and the black sooty residue left on the books and packs, and the feelings of utter despair, then anger, then determination to overcome the destruction. Then, to be practical and start cleaning, ready to start afresh.

We needed to improve security arrangements – and used the opportunity to improve the design of the facilities being replaced.

S I was going to see the PEEP Director the next day. She phoned me quite late saying you can't come, we've had a fire. She sounded quite gutted ('gu'id' as my daughter says). I thought 'Oh, so that's the kind of organisation PEEP is'.

S Thinking back to my interview in June 1999, I remember in particular the size of the room. It was held in the Deputy Director's office and with four people in there it was perhaps not the best setting for an interview as it was too cramped (personal space invasion almost!). This was probably due to the shortage of suitable alternatives. Premises are an issue which continues to present problems for PEEP.

F The first time I visited the PEEP Centre I felt scary. I felt the 'sensitivity' ended here – the way they run sessions is so comfortable, colourful... it was a real contrast. I saw the big PEEP sign in yellow and I didn't like it. It needs a big picture of a laughing child. Everyone is welcoming in the office, but you don't feel there is space for you. There is no PEEP visitors' room.

Diary

Premises

1995

September PEEP Centre open in a spare classroom at Windale School by kind permission of the Headteacher and Governors.

1996

January Premises found for twelve new groups.

September Move to hastily renovated old Peers School Canteen and classroom, by a combination of PEEP's builder and a band of helpers from PEEP staff's families. Conversion included offices and resources space, meetings / groups room, small office, kitchen and toilets.

September Premises found or re-negotiated for sixteen groups.

December Further building work to Centre to meet expansion of groups in January.

1997

January Premises found or re-negotiated for thirty-two groups a week.

April Building work at premises, for security and for expanded staff and resources.

May Centre re-organised to accommodate more staff.

September Premises found or re-negotiated for forty-two groups a week.

1998

January Various issues at the Centre to accommodate new people, desks etc. Centre re-organised for much-needed desk space; no groups held in the Centre from now on.

January Builder and Director meet about space (or lack of it) in Centre. Considered range of possibilities including building onto the roof, enclosing the Courtyard, knocking down more walls inside. Ultimately, none practical.

January Considerable difficulty finding premises for groups.

January Planning with Blackbird Leys Leisure Centre as venue for Certificate Fair.

February Arson attack on Centre, resulting in major fire. Centre re-located in two rooms and small office at the back of the Halliday Building. Programme with parents continued. Extremely difficult

time for Centre staff, dealing with reactions and consequences. All staff under considerable pressure for remainder of the term.

March Moved back into the renovated Centre, only four weeks after the fire. Much gratitude to the LEA and all who helped. Relief to be back, mixed with awareness of how much work both outstanding in the project and generated by the fire, remains to be done. Suspect hidden consequences will continue to hit us for some time to come.

1999

June PEEP Training Centre area wholly inadequate to accommodate PEEP, Learning Bridge and Sure Start work. LEA agree to re-locate Rovacabins on Peers campus for PEEP.

Summer Premises re-organised.

October Planning permission granted for Rovacabins.

October Negotiations with LEA re cost of moving Cabins and tasks involved.

December Rovacabins arrive. Services connected at top speed. Gratitude expressed to LEA.

2000

January Probation Service paint Rovacabins, now used as Meeting/Training Room, Creche and Office space for Learning Bridge and other PEEP group staff.

March Meeting with Chief Education Officer and his Deputy re premises and future development.

March Project review and re-organisation of use of Centre and office spaces for all staff. Crisis situation, with work in three different un-related buildings – all with security problems – causing considerable difficulty and stress. Can only get worse as work continues to develop and expand. Desperation setting in.

April Learning Bridge moves to Community Education Centre. Cabins continue for creche and training; Meeting Room for Group Leaders. Offices in the Cabins will be for Human Resources Co-ordinator and National Development Officer, both due to take up appointments shortly.

April Meeting with LEA about possible use of premises on school site. Ideal building originally envisaged as the solution not now available.

May Second meeting with LEA and Peers School Headteacher re premises needs. Premises paper written for County Council members.

July On-going premises crisis.

4C: Finance and Funding

Income – various sources of funding; and expenditure – systems for managing, accounting and reporting

This is about early financing. A tentative budget had been set as early as February 1994, for £1m over five years – an average of £200,000 p.a. Not much thought had been given as to where such a sum could come from, other than a concept of raising £50,000 each (£10,000 p.a.) from a number of partners, and a hope that Hamilton Trust would be able to supply significant sums, particularly in the first years, if that were necessary. The partners were envisaged as large corporates (enlightened self-interest and what might now be termed as 'cause-related marketing'), the public sector (including city and county council) and charitable trusts.

As the project plan progressed, it became increasingly apparent that it would be very difficult to raise such a large sum (£50,000) from a company; and the finances of local councils were under pressure, so this source didn't look hopeful either. But other possibilities emerged, in particular the first round of the Single Regeneration Budget (SRB). We contacted the recently formed Government Office for the South East (GOSE), felt that PEEP would be an appropriate applicant and were quick to draft a bid. There then followed some weeks of consolidation as GOSE made clear their preference for co-ordinated bids, as opposed to a multitude of individual, possibly over-lapping, applications. Although we were initially concerned that we might get drawn into unnecessary or complex (and possibly bureaucratic) relationships, we were satisfied with the end position: a joint bid of about ten projects, centred on Blackbird Leys and Cowley, would be submitted under the light-touch co-ordination of the Heart of England TEC. We were also pleased to be able to put our case directly to Gillian Ashworth, the Director of GOSE, whom we saw at Peers School as part of her fact-finding visit to the area.

PEEP's SRB bid was for £250,000 over the five years and we were delighted when, in the spring of 1995, we heard it had been successful. Although it would only mean receiving a maximum of £30,000 from SRB during PEEP's first twelve months, the knowledge that we were likely to receive £250,000 over the lifetime of the project was the single biggest factor in enabling PEEP to plan determinedly, from the start, for its ambitious programme. In that first year, ending March 1996, most of the balance of the income came from Hamilton Trust (£128,000).

There were a few failures too. We applied for around £100,000 from

the National Lottery Charities Board. Despite having heard that our assessor had described our bid as one of the best he had seen, we were unsuccessful. We didn't fail in a bid to the EU, we just declared 'no contest'. Because Oxford was not a hardship area, whatever the level of disadvantage of any individual area within the City, we were excluded from the most promising avenues; also, the process looked unduly complex and time-consuming.

In the second year (to March 1997), in addition to grants totalling £60,000 from the SRB/TEC and £80,000 (Hamilton Trust), there were three new sources. A hundred marathon runners, with a good contingent from Oxford, ran the 1996 Centenary Athens Marathon – along the historic route from the village of Marathon to the 1896 Olympic stadium in the centre of Athens. The organising committee had decided to concentrate the collective sponsorship money on five educational and training projects around the world. PEEP was fortunate in representing Europe and received close to £50,000. In addition, PEEP received the first instalments from two substantial and prestigious charities, the Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust and the Gatsby Charitable Trust (for £25,000 and £15,000 respectively). Our subsequent contacts with Esmee Fairbairn were to lead to a very substantial grant which later enabled PEEP to embark on its second five-year plan. The grant from Gatsby (the principal Sainsbury family trust), with the initial contact arising through the Athens Marathon, was to total £75,000 over the five years. We remain extraordinarily grateful to both charities.

S I will remember with permanent gratitude the voluntary help given by an ex-colleague throughout the period 1995 – 1998 re the budget and finance systems. We were too small then to have finance staff in the way that we do now, and this expert flexible help made such a difference.

S Another matter for permanent gratitude is the approach of the Hon. Treasurer Trustee who at the start of the project offered to carry the main responsibility for the fund-raising while we 'did' the project. This support, extending to a wide range of other issues as well, has remained unshakably throughout the period, and the project would most certainly not be where it is without it. An associated memory is of the gradual sinking realisation that once we had got going we were inevitably caught up in the fund-raising too, because of the need to talk about progress and plans from the practitioner perspective.

We have enjoyed the benefit of a variety of discounted rates and volunteer help given in relation to IT and database support, builders/handymen, resources preparation etc.

In opening the post every day I always remember opening letters that state PEEP is being awarded money. It's a really good feeling to get that letter after I've seen a lot of effort (not mine in particular) go into the applications. It is a very satisfying experience.

Three of us went up to London to present our case for funding to the Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust. It was quite an occasion. We were ushered in, and all the Trustees – it seemed about eighteen – were ranged around the most enormous and most polished mahogany table I've ever seen. It was rather dim light, and gloomy portraits on the walls – an unnerving experience but worth every moment as we *were* granted one million pounds, which was their major grant that year and of course very significant funding for us.

Diary

Finance and funding

1995

1996

September Overall cost of new Centre (all aspects) c £18,000. Represents good value if seen as premises costs spread over four years.

October Budget Meeting: current flexibility exists to absorb Centre costs, home visiting and admin; and for next term's expansion.

October Athens Marathon generated £49,000 for PEEP.

December Work on 96 –7 budget: continued flexibility essential as development rate hard to predict.

1997

January Grant of £90,000 awarded over three years by the Gatsby Charitable Foundation.

September Successful SRB visit to monitor accounts.

Sepember Tudor Trust grant of £105,000

September SRB visit to monitor accounts: satisfactory.

1998

January Director met with Esmee Fairbairn Adviser re possible shift from local to national perspective and funding implications; and possibility of application for start-up funding for Oxford Brookes cross-departmental 'Children and Families' initiative.

January Work with volunteer adviser re structure and general approach in Esmee Fairbairn application.

January Trustee and Director met with Esmee Fairbairn Adviser to discuss application for funding to Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust.

February Extra Trustees' meeting: partly 1998-9 budget.

February Final budget-setting.

February Application to Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust completed and delivered.

April Successful completion of inspection by TEC for SRB.

April Adult and Community Learning Fund grant of £58,000 awarded.

April Challenge Fund (SRB): monitoring visit from Heart of England TEC re Self Assessment Survey. Stage one of lengthy process completed.

May Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust granted PEEP six months' funding towards the first year of the Birth to School Study; and asked for a presentation to help them consider the main proposal, possibly in July.

June Successful completion of inspection by TEC for SRB grant.

July Need to reduce the Esmee Fairbairn application significantly for it to be considered. Re-submit in Autumn for consideration in December.

August Anonymous grant of £2,000 for Training Library books.

December Grant of £1,000,000 from Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust, to be spread over four years.

1999

January Finance Officer (three days a month) in post. Overhaul of accounting and reporting procedures.

November Director and Finance Officer working on accountability for Sure Start budget for PEEP, EAZ budget, Development Plan budget and staff pay / contracts. Finance Officer's presentation to PEEP Trustees' meeting in December to include audited accounts for '98 – '99; this year's accounts to date (half year); outline budget for Phase Two Development; budget for 2000 – 2001.

November Meeting with Director of EAZ re EAZ contribution to funding for Nursery PEEP beyond July 2000.

Agreed likely solutions, subject to approval by EAZ Steering Group.

December Gatsby Charitable Foundation application unsuccessful.

December Funding applications – for publications development and for core funding to complete Phase Two.

December DfEE grant of £332,662 for two comparative studies: OUDES Threes and Fours Study and NFER Birth to School Study.

2000

January Addressing additional funding issues raised by collaboration with Sure Start, EAZ and Learning Bridge.

January Addressing additional funding issues raised by the development of new publications, PEEP Link and Phase Two development, especially dissemination and replication.

May Finance Assistant started.

May Report to Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust re expenditure of grant 1999-2000.

June Financial outlook crisis, PEEP currently not sustainable beyond 2001: five-year plan with alternative exit strategies proposed.

June Hamilton Trust grant of £350,000 : full project can continue until 2002, with decisions to be made by April 2001 relating to 2002 – 2005.

June Lloyds TSB Foundation for England and Wales granted £105,000 for publications development and first print-run.

July Home Office Family Support Grant funding for National Development Officer for two years.

July Query: should PEEP apply for VAT registration?

Donations Received

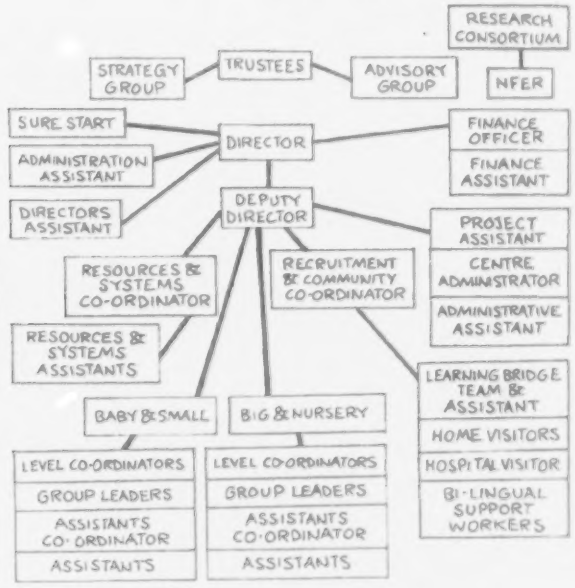
	1995/96 £'000	1996/97 £'000	1997/98 £'000	1998/99 £'000	1999/00 £'000	2000/01 £'000	Total £'000
SRB Challenge Fund	30.0	60.0	85.7	60.0	14.3		250.0
Athens Marathon		47.9	1.4				49.3
Hamilton Trust	128.0	80.0	130.0	145.7	50.0	50.0	583.7
Esmee Fairbairn Charitable Trust		25.0	25.0	53.0	400.0	300.0	803.0
Gatsby Charitable Foundation		15.0	30.0	30.0	15.0		90.0
Tudor Trust			35.0	35.0	35.0		105.0
Sure Start					23.5	134.7	158.2
NIACE				9.9	48.1		58.0
Lloyds TSB Foundation						105.0	105.0
Home Office Family Support Grant						49.4	49.4
NFER & OUDES Research Studies						75.7	75.7
EAZ/ Nursery PEEP						35.0	35.0
Oxfordshire County Council gift in kind					20.0		
Other income / donations	3.5		2.4	5.1	8.5		19.5
Total	**161.5**	**227.9**	**309.5**	**338.7**	**614.4**	**749.8**	**2381.8**

Chapter 5

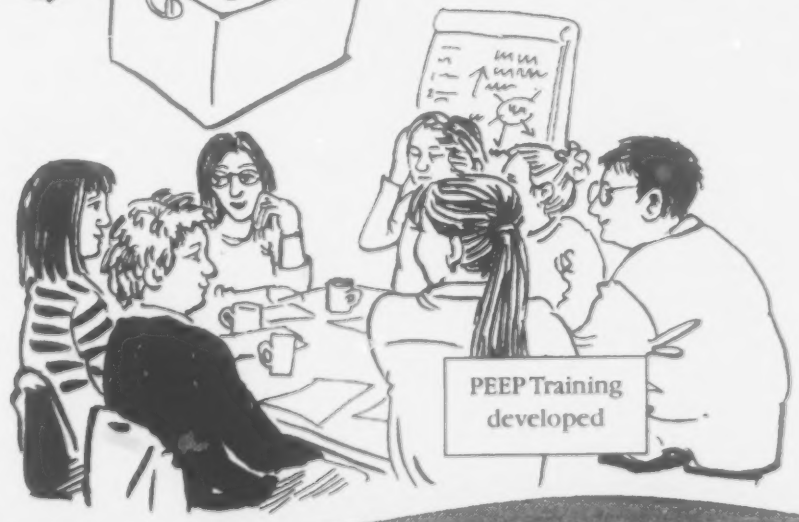
'People' has also been divided; this time into two sections. 5A is about staff recruitment and management; and 5B looks at training and development for staff, parents and carers.

Management structure established

PEEP MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE



Early staff appointments



PEEP Training developed

1995 1997 1997

People

Hope your road is a long one.
May there be many summer mornings when,
With what pleasure, what joy,
You enter harbours you're seeing for the first time.

CAVAFY

Chapter 5: People

5A: Staff recruitment and management

S At my interview I had to teach the panel a song. It was nerve-wracking!

S I'll never forget the '£10 interview' for the job of Resources Co-ordinator. Once we had been short-listed we were given a £10 cheque to spend on creating a play-pack for a three-year-old in the most resourceful way. I *so* enjoyed this task, and revelled in making a metallic purple dressing-up cloak and tunic for £1.50. The interview itself was *really* enjoyable.

S I remember being asked if I would be interested in being a Group Assistant after doing PEEP training. I felt honoured and proud to be asked to be part of something so good. The PEEP training was an achievement. One, I *did* the training. Two, I did the writing – the essay form was not easy. Three, my daughter settled into creche at once. Now she comes to a group and fits into it very well.

PEEP has developed me as a person. PEEP's training and development for me on the course and as an Assistant has helped me as a person. I look at my notes when things happen at home with my two-year-old daughter. I use my notes to help sort out a problem.

S The Director approached me on Peers School Campus one day, asking me to consider coming to PEEP training, and would I be interested in working for PEEP? I felt so proud and confident, I went home glowing. I had been given the confidence to apply.

S I remember another assistant commenting after I had applied for this new post that 'Only a mug would apply for a job where they seem to have taken all the horrible jobs nobody wants to do and put them all together'. I have now done this job for two years and must say I have never done anything so varied (apart from Motherhood!) As the job has developed, I now do anything from sewing to cleaning to staff relief and organisation all in the same week. I think it helps to remember that this is a 'developing' project; ie it's still developing.

Having been successful at interview I was pleased to be given a varied role as part of the PEEP staff as an admin assistant. Then at the twelfth hour, I was asked to change my direction and take on the finance and payments. I thought 'What have I let myself in for' but agreed to try. In the event I had not only the finance to deal with, but understanding what PEEP was all about. The administration was very enjoyable – and finding out what other members of staff did. It was hard work wearing two hats with the different roles, and also working with two different groups (Learning Bridge and PEEP), and also working in three work places – the Office, the Centre, and finally the Cabins.

Splitting myself in three places was not easy, but I enjoyed the work.

Not knowing much about PEEP and seeing an advert for a Group Leader, I went and found out and spoke to a few people about PEEP. I thought, I won't be able to do this, I'm not good enough, they don't want someone like me, I can't do it.

Then my mum and my friend who was already a Group Leader said go for it, you can, you enjoy working with children and believe in PEEP. So I went for an interview after a funeral, thinking nothing could be as bad as a very good friend dying.

So I went in and felt so welcomed, everyone was so nice and we just all spoke and got on so well, it felt like I had known everyone for years, it still stays with me how nice everyone in PEEP is. Everyone speaks, everyone smiles, and we all get on and have the same problems – oh yes, I got the job – I was the proudest person on earth that day!

I shall never forget the conversation I had with the Co-director at the end of the PEEP training when she asked if I would be interested in working for PEEP. I was dead keen but a little under-confident. I suggested that perhaps I should start as an Assistant and she said don't be silly of course you can lead a group – and I found it impossible not to believe her, she had such conviction! Throughout my first few terms there was always a member of the management team around to support me and ask how things had gone as I came back from my groups.

I realise that a few well-timed and well-chosen words make so much difference to your self-esteem and confidence. We need to hang on to the time it takes for this.

S I loved being part of PEEP especially early on as it was fantastic to work in an environment of almost all women, of all ages. It felt very caring and nurturing and warm and unique. However, towards the end of my time at PEEP I felt there had become a culture almost of mistrust, of secrets and hierarchies to some extent and this needed to be confronted, talked through and disposed of. That there was a great need to bring in more people from a more diverse cultural and class background who perhaps would have more in common with the parents and children we worked with especially in terms of approaches to group organisation and involvement. However, all this is said in the light of PEEP being a fantastic resource and organisation and a place which I feel a great warmth and respect for!

O The Director knew that I had recently retired and had some spare time, and asked me if I might be interested in helping a bit with PEEP. She arranged for me to meet two of the staff to talk about what I might do. I was apprehensive when I went to what I thought of as a sort of interview. The staff talked to me about the project and we thought that there were many odd jobs I could do in the PEEP Centre.

I've been once a week ever since (that was September 1996) and have found everyone extremely helpful and supportive. At a difficult time for me later PEEP was the only activity with which I continued and I was always at ease there.

S I remember very fondly my early days as Deputy Director, sharing the Director's little office, now mine. You would think it would have been claustrophobic, but it wasn't. It was my period of apprenticeship. There was time to think and I was learning an enormous amount. Actually not as much as I was going to do once I was doing the job more fully! I think it was during this period that she and I built up the trust between us which enables us to work together and independently.

SI remember the end-of-term party held in Peers Sports Centre. I was leaving Chaffinches and Swans to return to college. I was very sad to have to leave these groups – I remember being presented with cards (which I still have) and gifts (pens, paper, pencil case) by the children. Sometimes I still help in groups, and I realised that I felt – and still feel – valuable in the group setting.

OWhen I was asked to be responsible for the Director's appraisal, I believed this was a fairly straightforward task, I had done many similar appraisals, and although time-consuming, they presented no surprises. I received positive feedback from all the senior management team and everything seemed to be as it should, until I started a formal interview with her. By now we knew each other fairly well, but I had no idea of the hours she worked (nor I believe did anyone else!). I have more recently become her line manager and the problem persists although it has improved slightly.

Diary

Staff recruitment and management

1994

November Full-time Co-Director interviewed and appointed, to take up post for one day in week in January and then full-time in April.

1995

January onwards Co-director and Hon. Treasurer Trustee: regular meetings for advice and support to Co-Director.

July Groups Co-ordinator, Resources Co-ordinator and Assistant, and Centre Administrator interviewed and appointed for September.

September Development Plan agreed by Steering Group in operation.

September Staff take up posts, working in spare classroom at newly opened Windale First School, Greater Leys.

December First full Trustees' Meeting.

December All staff successfully completed probationary phase.

December New staff (Group Leaders and Group Assistants) recruited for January.

1996

February PEEP team away: Co-director, Groups Co-ordinator, Resources Co-ordinator and Resources Assistant work in Cornwall over half-term on programme development and accompanying resources materials needs.

June New Home Visitor.

September PEEP sessions available in every Playgroup and Nursery class in area.

September New Group Leader – also a parent at Baby PEEP – started training.

September Two new Group Assistants.

September Two new Group Leaders.

September Later Group Leader joined a Baby group as a mum.

September Small PEEP Group Leader started PEEP training.

September Recruitment and Home Visits Co-ordinator took up post.

September 96 – May 97 Group Leaders monitored and supported, with continuing training sessions and supervision for the various categories of staff.

October Seven people in the Centre PEEP team, most of whom are part time. These are an Administrator, a Groups Co-ordinator, a

Home Visits Co-ordinator, a Resources Co-ordinator and an Assistant, and two Co-directors.

Currently six Group Leaders, seven Group Assistants and three Home Visitors are also employed for lesser, varying proportions of the week.

The Group Leaders all have training and experience both in early childhood education and in working with adults.

An Advisory Group and a Strategy Group support the Trustees, the PEEP staff and the Evaluation Team in their various roles.

November Advertisement for the Nursery post.

Novembet First Group Leader illness this term.

November Staff and venues for next term's groups finalised.

November Interviews and appointment made for Pre-School Groups Co-ordinator post, to start in January. Literacy Consultant also appointed for next term, plus a Group Leader for two Nursery PEEP groups.

December New Home Visitor started.

December 'Works Night Out' !

December PEEP Christmas lunch party – extremely delicious food provided by staff.

December Christmas week, Centre closed.

New Year week, Centre closed but Centre staff working part of the week.

1997

January Pre-School Groups Co-ordinator started.

January Two new Group Leaders.

March Staffing preparations (as in December) for second expansion of groups next term (thirty-two existing + ten new = forty-two groups ready for April).

March Level co-ordinators start one day a week.

April New Group Leader (running two groups).

May Future Human Resources Co-ordinator (2000) started as a parent.

July Part-time Co-director left PEEP to work for Hamilton Reading Project. Full-time Co-director appointed Director.

October Review and overhaul of PEEP management structure; Working Areas established, and new staffing structure to deal with increasing scale and complexities of work. Senior management team in operation, use of GANNT charts to facilitate planning of different areas of PEEP work.

December New Resources Assistant and Project Assistant appointed, to start in January.

1998

January 'Information Sharing' meeting for all staff, every Friday at 12.00. Notes posted in Centre.

January Difficulties with a few unfilled group staff posts.

January New Baby Group Leader (running two groups).

January Resources, Recruitment and Groups Co-ordinators all now on four days a week.

January New Project Assistant takes up post (twenty-four hours a week).

February Fire at PEEP Centre results in staff under considerable pressure for remainder of term.

March Resignation of Nursery Level Co-ordinator. Director to cover next term, with a Nursery Group Leader's support, pending new appointment in September.

March Planning for Literacy Play Advisor post in place of Nursery Level Co-ordinator post.

April Future National Development Officer (2000) started as a PEEP parent.

April Better employment information given to part-time 'casual' staff.

April PEEP Deputy Director appointed.

April Early Years Literacy Play Advisor appointed: to facilitate the change to Nursery groups being run by school staff, supported by PEEP Nursery team.

April Equal opportunities employment and personnel issues laid out clearly in the Handbook, accessible to all staff.

April Clarification of line management issues, and procedures for allocation of casual work.

April Database recording of all staff training.

Analysis of salaried post applications re ethnicity and disability.

May Birth to School Study Research Assistant's resignation for personal reasons: two part-time fieldworkers recruited.

September Deputy Director takes up post.

September Early Years Literacy Play Advisor takes up post.

September Assistants' Co-ordinator post created and filled.

1999

January Part-time Finance Officer Consultant in post.

March Resignation of Centre Co-ordinator.

March New post started: part-time Project Assistant (for Director)/Learning Bridge Assistant. Also covered until appointment of new Centre Administrator.

April Assistants awarded pay rise, from £4 per hour to £4.50.

July New Centre Administrator started.

July New Director's Assistant started.

September New PEEP Nursery team of three experienced Nursery teachers; funded by EAZ and employed through Peers School, managed by PEEP's Early Years Literacy Play Advisor.

September New Nursery Assistants' Co-ordinator.

September Resources and Systems Co-ordinator unable to work for extended period.

November Early Years Literacy Play Advisor continuing to manage Nursery Level next term, although no longer in PEEP Management Team.

November Employment tribunal situation relating to possibility of inadvertent redundancy/dismissal action.

November Group Leader contracts to incorporate some of the home visits in Link Delivery into Group Leaders' work, thereby creating more flexibility both for staff and for the provision of supply cover.

2000

January Director awarded OBE for contribution to early education; party in Centre.

January One staff member acting as Group Assistant, Assistants' Co-ordinator and Acting Group Leader all at the same time; and another acting as Baby Level Group Leader, acting Ones Group Leader and Twos Group Leader all at the same time; indications of pressures in staffing.

January New Threes Group Leader.

February Meeting with volunteer consultant about reviewing salary scales.

February Discussions and consultation re long-term illness issues.

February Interviews and appointment for Human Resources Co-ordinator.

April Appointments of 0-2s Co-ordinator (SMT post), Fours Co-ordinator (SMT post), Ones and Twos Co-ordinators, and Link Visits Co-ordinator. These were all internal appointments, made with correct procedures.

May Human Resources Co-ordinator (also a PEEP parent) took up post.

May Nursery Co-ordinator took up post.

May New Baby Group Leader.

May Staff job evaluation exercise in progress.

June First ever Assistants' Tea.

July National Development Officer (also a PEEP parent) took up post.

5B: Training and development for staff, parents'and carers

S At the end of one PEEP training session the Director read the story 'The Mousehole Cat', by candlelight (I think – or the lights were dimmed). It was magical and atmospheric. It showed me how powerful story-telling and reading can be for adults as well as children, and took me back to my childhood bed-time stories. I felt warm, cosy, comfortable and happy!

S In February 1996, when the project had been going for six months, the team went to stay in Cornwall for a few days. It was an inspired way to work! Dramatic scenery, a stone cottage close to cliff edge, our very small team (only five of us). There were intensive work sessions, space to think, and less intensive times to walk the cliffs and mull over ideas.

S I didn't enjoy the training, everyone said how they had and how good it was. I felt very guilty when I didn't enjoy (some of it). I don't know why or perhaps it was things I had already gone over at my playgroup training. Everyone was very nice.

S In January 1997 we started the system where Open College Networks accreditation was available to everyone who kept their Yellow Book up to date over a year.

The PEEP Certificate is awarded at OCN Level One, and can be started in any term. It takes three terms of PEEP to complete. There are three criteria for the award of the PEEP certificate:

1 Go to PEEP as regularly as possible, and at least fifteen times in the year (five times a term)
2 Keep the Yellow Book diary ('How's It Going?') pages up to date.
3 Share a book with your child as near to every day as possible, and at least three times a week
4 The Yellow Book 'diary' page is the record for the PEEP certificate and is of course available for all parents. It can be kept up to date at home, or with the Group Leader or Assistant at the session.

When we began this system 120 parents chose to start, and a term later 104 are into their second term.

S At one all-day training session we had to draw around our hand and arm and put our name on it and all had to go around writing positive comments about each hand on it, ie saying how

wonderful we all were. It was embarrassing.

I saw one of the others going around to hands with very little on adding positive comments.

It was a nice lunch and a lovely place but I left feeling very uncomfortable. I am a drama teacher but I find being put on a spot and made to expose yourself and others difficult. I felt vulnerable.

S At one all-day training session I only knew the people I had trained with before and though I enjoyed (and found useful) some activities, I felt very uncomfortable with 'the hands'. We were all asked to draw round our hand and arm on a long piece of paper, write our name on it, and then walk round and write positive comments about other people. I didn't mind writing about others, but I was terrified that I would be the *only* hand with no comment at all. I was slightly comforted by seeing one of the others (with a slightly harassed expression) writing a comment on *every* hand. (I didn't go back and check the comments under my own hand.) It was a year before I realised that other people had disliked the experience and it wasn't until today that I realised *everyone* had hated it. 'Wasn't it *dreadful*' we said in a group of five or six.

S The training day at Charney Manor was fun, but also a day for learning how to co-operate and work with groups. At the end we were asked to write down what we were going to do. This statement was then put in a self-addressed envelope and would be sent to us about six weeks hence. In due course an envelope came through the letter box, and inside the statement. Did I write that? Had I done it? There was a sense of reassurance as I realised that I *had* done most of what I had resolved to do.

S There was a really interesting exercise at the Manzil Way training. It was a time line of our own experience. When we were born and all the experiences we had had in our lives. It was aimed at realising what different experiences everyone has and how they contribute. I felt positive about myself to realise the variety of jobs and experiences I'd had. We had Magic Café food too. PEEP, keep on being good at food at training, it helps.

S I remember giving INSET training to thirty-five teachers of bi-lingual children at the Cricket Road Centre on PEEP playpacks, many of which I had designed and made. The Director strongly encouraged me to do it – I thought I *couldn't* (and had 'kittens' at the idea). But she thought I *could* – so I *did*! This was a very significant

event for my personal development – it was my first ever talk!

S At a training session in 1996 about the dynamics of groups all the pieces started to fall into place for me. PEEP was about group rules that everyone agrees. Not about 'teaching' parents.

S I thought the staff training was really wonderful. I specially loved the story of the Mousehole Cat – read aloud by candle-light. I greatly hoped to be able to use it in PEEP – but that hasn't happened. However it's added to my interest and pleasure now that I'm a granny....

F We'd started the training – it was the first daytime training with creche, so the session had mostly parents present (doing the training). The Pre-school Literacy Play Advisor was running the session, it was about Body Language. Her talk was captivating, we were all really quiet until the end, then she was bombarded with questions about the subject. There was so much the group (as parents) did which we didn't realise was 'classic' body language when relating to babies and toddlers. Afterwards we all discussed what we'd learnt and said we'd all think about what we were doing much more and how informative the session had been.

F In the PEEP training it was funny, everything we said made common sense, but it was things we never really think about!

S We had begun to include interested parents on the PEEP evening training course, and the first group was very keen. At the last session they asked what they would be studying next. The result was a visit by the Dean of Ruskin College to tell them about courses, but they pointed out the difficulties of getting into town, and the impossibility of enrolling on a course if it was all the way into town and no childcare. Eventually it was agreed that what was really needed were courses right here at PEEP – and so the idea of Learning Bridge was born – a satellite project that would support PEEP Certificate parents to continue their learning in whatever way suited them best.

S I remember thinking in 1999 that we'd done all this training with group staff since 1996 and that it would be interesting to look back over the record and see what we had covered. This is what I found:

- Working with groups; the group process; group dynamics and ground rules
- ORIM; session plans; 'Think of it this way' pages; 'How's it going?' pages; reviews and recording
- Induction, Yellow Book pages and session plans
- Assistants' roles and responsibilities
- Rationale and use of Resources Library
- Group Leader responsibilities; home visiting; flagpole statements; organisation of groups; resources
- Equal opportunities policy in action; filling in enrolment papers
- Talking Time strategies; diary pages
- Puppet making
- Story-telling workshop: starting points, scenarios, use of books and props, puppets
- Dealing with children's challenging behaviour; using schemas; drawing and writing
- Using scrap
- Making PEEP a positive experience: ground rules, greeting, talking, goodbye, admin and health and safety issues
- Group Leader training: admin (Yellow Books, OCN pages, forms); handbook; health and safety; parents', children's and Group Leaders' perspectives on PEEP (PEEP – coming or going?)
- PEEP coming or going? (2): current project position
- Ages and stages
- Publications and network; handbook; Learning Bridge
- Assistants' training: planning with Group Leaders; borrowing procedure
- Social and emotional development in young children; concerning daytime, nighttime, steps to sharing
- Group Leader training: Guidelines, relationship between Guidelines and 'At Home'
- Induction; scenarios; reminders
- PEEP Vision and Values
- Relationship between PEEP and parents' homes – what do parents do at home, how do home issues affect groups?
- Use of music: early experiences, aspects of music, music and language development
- Use of music: culture and songs
- Manual handling

Diary

Training and development for staff, parents and carers

1995

October First PEEP evening training course, for current and new (for January) staff and Trustees. This course has run every term throughout Phase One except for one term (Summer 2000).

December Home visiting training for Centre staff.

1996

March Training for new group staff.

March Home visiting training for Group Leaders.

September Induction for new staff.

September Open College Networks application for parents' accreditation accepted (best one they'd ever had they said!) OCN accreditation for parents for each year, at Level One. Criteria for accreditation will include eighteen hours' contact time with PEEP staff, either in a group setting or at home; a record of regular book-sharing; and entries in the child's Yellow Book. (Accreditation requires at least thirty hours' involvement of various sorts). Scheme will start January '97.

September Two Westminster College students start one-term observation placement in groups.

October Preparations for first session of PEEP training. Courses approved (and commended, especially equal opportunities section).

October PEEP Scrap Materials Workshop run for local pre-school staff.

November Group Leader training (old and new leaders). Focus on being more explicit with parents about reasons for doing things.

November Training for new Home visitors.

November OCN Recognition Panel for five courses 'Helping Children to Learn at Home' (corresponding to PEEP's five levels).

1997

January Induction for new group staff, especially Small PEEP and Nursery PEEP: co-ordinators, group leaders and assistants.

January PEEP OCN Certificate began, with 120 parents starting (104 are still on track January – June).

May Whole staff training on systems management.

May Whole staff training day on equal opportunities.

June PEEP training sessions monitored and approved by OCN.

September Group staff Training week: from now on, pre-Week One week for groups always designated Training Week for staff.

September Whole staff training day about working with parents, with staff from the Pen Green Centre, Corby.

September Group leaders training: ground rules in groups, introducing PEEP to parents, follow up visits.

October Training on supporting parents in relation to their children's behaviour.

October Story Tellers' meeting for review and to organise remaining five Reading is Fundamental Book Distributions.

November Community Education meeting about access routes for PEEP OCN parents.

November Planning for OCN Certificate and Community Education Fair in February.

November Equal opportunities training for staff.

December Successful OCN moderation.

1998

January PEEP training Day for Group Leaders and Assistants: Careers Guidance for parents/carers, local adult basic skills support, new PEEP video; then level meetings in pm.

January Training planning: standing agenda item in Working Area meetings, including re *process* from identification of need to delivery and evaluation of training.

February Spring Term PEEP evening training has two new staff on it, plus eight mothers from groups: probably half to work in PEEP and half for interest.

February First Peep Certificate Fair and video launch a splendid event, attended by 200 families, Community Education providers' exhibition, Andrew Smith MP and Graham Badman CEO. Over 100 parents who had been in the programme for a year and had qualified for an OCN certificate at Level One were invited to attend the presentation ceremony to collect their certificates. The presentation of certificates was combined with a 'Learning Fair', with approximately twenty Community Education displays, where PEEP area families could find out what other learning opportunities are available to them.

Fifty-five mothers came to collect their certificates, which were given to them by Andrew Smith MP (Minister for Employment, Welfare to Work and Equal Opportunities). There was also a 'big screen' presentation of the new twenty-minute PEEP video.

February Management Team day at Charney: re post-fire

management; funding application; and resources development.

February Management support: difficult to work on proposal when Management Team is under so much pressure from the fire that it is hard *any* time to consult and discuss.

March SMT and Management Consultant: Management training session.

March Management Team Charney Day: Long-term resources, Handbook plus Idea Library, 'How's it Going?' pages, Nursery post, Casual holiday work, complete Guidelines.

April New PEEP Resources Library open; focus for training.

April Ruskin College course for PEEP parents.

April PEEP training at Oxford Brookes University validated: start date undecided.

April Adult and Community Learning Fund grant awarded for PEEP Learning Bridge.

1999

January Learning Bridge started.

January New PEEP Training Centre in use (room next to the Day Nursery at the top of the campus).

November Contribution to OCN Panel for Family Literacy course.

December Registered for crèche provision.

December Meeting with Director and Lecturer from Westminster Institute of Education at Oxford Brookes University: discussion re Group Leader Training, HE Certificate Level.

2000

January Learning Bridge plan, crèche policy, exit strategy meetin

January Start of PEEP Phase Two Training plan.

February Child Health course started. First run with accreditation.

February Group Leader training: children's relationships.

February Plan for Learning Bridge to be taken into the Community Education Plan with dedicated CEC staff.

March Very early planning for HE Certificate and training progression right through PEEP. Issues raised included study skills and access elements in our training.

March Meeting with County Home-School Partnership staff re various training aspects of development work with parents.

March Early Learning Goals training session by LEA Adviser (PEEP consistent with the new aims for the Foundation Stage).

March Learning Bridge Project ends with PEEP and continues in Community Education. Eleven courses had run plus ninety-nine individual guidance interviews completed.

April Further HE Certificate course planning: title 'Helping Children to

Learn at Home (PEEP)'.

April Group Leader training: covered PEEP training model, current provision for staff, Learning Bridge developments, current provision for parents, HE certificate and study group suggestion.

April Group and other PEEP staff attended LEA training on children's social and emotional development.

May Training on Phase Two of PEEP and discussion with all staff.

May Meeting with WEA tutor about Study Skills session to begin PEEP evening training.

May Work on Higher Education certificate for PEEP Leaders.

July Work begun on OCN re-validation.

Chapter 6

'Collaboration' is about how PEEP worked with other providers, aiming to make the most of the potential for mutual support. This was a particularly active element of PEEP in 1998 – 1999 when the opportunity arose to help set up Rose Hill-Littlemore Sure Start.

Termly 'PEEP Lunchtime Meetings' started for early years workers in the PEEP area

First PEEP newsletter

PEEP Scrap Workshop for local pre-school staff

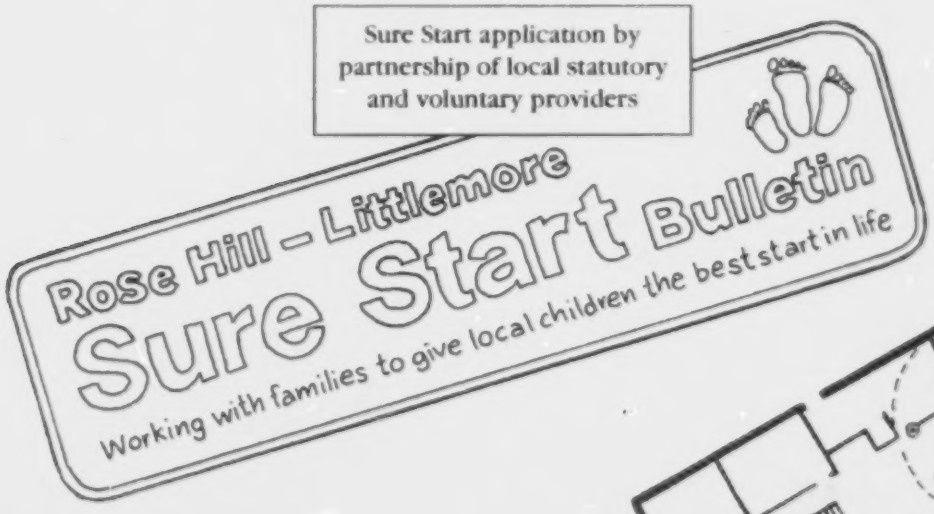
Collaboration

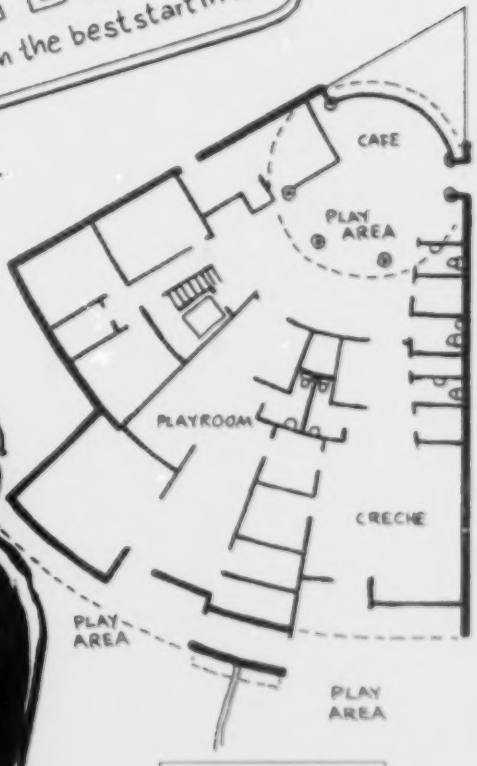
6

"You learn from the company you keep."

FRANK SMITH

Sure Start application by partnership of local statutory and voluntary providers





First OCN Certificate Fair as opportunity for Community Education providers' exhibition

Sure Start programme thriving, including new Sure Start Family Centre plans

Chapter 6: Collaboration

Working as a family centre outreach worker in the East of the city, I was aware of PEEP from its early beginnings. There were rumblings on the grapevine that 'something' was going on and I remember looking at the early job vacancies in the paper with great interest. I even thought about applying for a post way back then!

A particular memory is of the Director coming to a City Division Early Years Liaison Panel meeting. I have clear memories of what she looked like – even the fact that she wore glasses (very unusual for me). I had felt uneasy about particular areas of the city being targeted but it may have been then that I was reassured on this one. I was certainly impressed with the PEEP leaflets she handed out – the design was so attractive.

I think any project is bigger than itself, and messages filtered out are so important.

Early on in PEEP I heard about the Story Tent (through a nursery) and was delighted to be able to borrow it for a few sessions in the nursery. I had fun and games putting it up (the first time, anyway) and arranging the sahris to make it look inviting. We had several lovely story-sessions which gave me plenty of material for my assignments on the Children's Literature course. 'Owl Babies' and 'Oi, Get off our Train' were two of the best stories used. I made transcripts of the discussions which followed the story-reading and these were not just informative and revealing but also amusing!

It has been great that PEEP has been so ready to offer resources and help to students. Sharing good practice and ideas so generously has been a great encouragement and this continues as PEEP's ripples spread wider and beyond the immediate area.

I remember visiting 'Who Said Kids Were Easy?' (a PEEP Learning Bridge Course at the time) and meeting parents who were all so supportive of each other despite different backgrounds, abilities etc. But all of them were so enthusiastic about learning that they wanted to do at least one other course after that one finished. There was a real sense of friendship and enjoyment of rediscovering learning.

We've always tried to work closely with other providers in our catchment area, and people have been very supportive of PEEP.

109

The development of Sure Start has added a new dimension to our work and it's difficult to imagine working any other way now. There's time put aside and hard effort on everybody's part who works with under fours to understanding each other's practice and thinking together how what we are doing can be more useful to parents. We can access and offer a range of expertise that helps us all develop what we are doing. It is an exciting way of working

SI remember dragging the entire Sure Start Children's Learning and Care Working Group out into the drizzle, to go and stand on the bare tarmac behind the existing Family Centre. I waved my arms around and described the fabulous plans for the new Sure Start Family Centre... the community café, the health suite, the drop-in Playroom, the Creche and best of all – two new beautiful outdoor play areas for children and adults to enjoy together. We ran in the drizzle along the boundary (at least two of us did!) and used our imaginations to visualise the transformation needed.
One day soon, wet tarmac will be replaced by grass, trees, scented areas, winding paths, sand, water and dens – for children to play and explore in and parents to enjoy.

SI remembered what high hopes and expectations I had of Sure Start when we first heard about it. We had spent four years developing a new model and how were we to keep it going until it had been evaluated? We thought Sure Start would solve our funding problems and help establish our identity too – but it turned out to be so much more complicated than that. But although Sure Start only funds new work, and only in one-third of the PEEP area, it has helped us to develop better ways of working, especially with other service providers. Being part of Sure Start has enabled us to do a better job.

Diary

1995

September Small survey in the area in '94 shows mixed provision in the PEEP area to support parents and children under three years, with little for the very youngest children:

Two parent and toddler groups meet once a week.

One Family Centre funded by Social Services.

One Family Centre funded by the Local Education Authority.

60% of three-year-olds attend a playgroup for three or more sessions a week of 2.5 hrs.

100% of four-year-olds are in nursery classes for five mornings or five afternoons per week.

November First Early Years Workers Meeting at PEEP.

1996

September Meeting with Director of the Travellers Project; discussed making contact with families.

September Discussions with large local industry about three concerns re new young employees: about social skills, information technology and – most crucially – levels of literacy and numeracy. Interested in working with PEEP, taking a long-term view.

September Termly meetings with headteachers and with local pre-school and family workers from social services, health and education services and the voluntary sector.

September Blackbird Leys Under Fives Workers meeting: one playgroup closed, support for playgroups discussed.

September The Story Tent is used in a variety of settings, indoors and out. It is the igloo variety, and comes with a cosy eiderdown to sit on and a box of the very best books as well as an external covering of sari material which makes it look inviting and magical. Originally it was a means of introduction to various Under Fives settings. Now it is borrowed on a regular basis by most of the playgroups and nursery classes, and is available as a community resource.

October Liaison with Reading Quest project.

Nov ember Director to Early Years Team at LEA (Cricket Road) to give up-date about PEEP.

November Liaison with local director of Home Start.

November Director to conference on parenting programmes in Oxfordshire: useful for networking and for learning about local

groups: a Family Centre programme, a First School parenting course and a WEA Course.

November Agreement to Small PEEP Group at local Family Centre, subject to staff and users.

November 'PEEP Lunchtime Meeting' included Health Visitors: discussed low birth weight as criteria for targeting (approved), adult literacy issues, pre-birth mothers to Baby PEEP (approved) and PEEP developments.

November Meeting with Social Services. Information to them about PEEP and Family Nurturing Network. Very positive reception, and we can expect referrals. Need for us to link with Family Nurturing Network about co-ordinating our work and theirs for their most vulnerable families. Referrals from them most likely to come at top end of Small PEEP (nearly three years). They have a self-referral form. Programme runs in the Dovecote twice a year, for sixteen weeks.

November Meeting with staff member from the Able Learning Centre: she will talk to Group Leaders in February.

November Staff to meeting at Rose Hill Family Centre that was called in response to concerns about racism in the Rose Hill community generally.

November Blackbird Leys Community Development Initiative (CDI): issues about purpose, role etc. (It was formed originally because of cuts in funding for public provision.)

Discussed need for on-going lobby group for both urgent and long-term identification and support of the needs of families on Greater Leys.

December PEEP Christmas cards.

1997

January Blackbird Leys Under Fives and Families meeting. Main items were: impact of vouchers, the Under Fives Fair (April 26th) and the redundancies in the Social Services Early Years Team.

January Peers Special Needs dept. using Centre facilities because of being in the Halliday building following the fire.

January Start of PEEP newsletter – out termly to all community groups and service providers.

January Penny Tyack from Barton Schools about the Barton money and possible PEEP-type developments. Time-scale and extent of money available for this work not at all clear yet.

July Baby Massage Day.

July PEEP Library Day.

July 'Holiday PEEP' begun.

July Links with Oxfordshire Family Services plans.
September Director co-opted to Blackbird Leys CDI Executive.
September First contact with Oxford Parent-Infant Project.
September Thames Valley Early Intervention Forum.
October Community links review.

1998

January PEEP workshop presentation to Kidlington Partnership schools. Comment: good to show PEEP Video to secondary students as part of a Personal and Social Development course.
February Peep Certificate Fair and video launch combined with Community Education providers' exhibition attended by 200 families; Andrew Smith MP and Graham Badman CEO supported.
April PEEP staff on Blackbird Leys CDI Under Eights Sub Group; and co-opted to CDI Executive.
June Director's talk to Early Years Forum at Cricket Road (approximately 100 practitioners).
July Nursery PEEP Group at Windale First School shadowed Kate Greenaway awards.

1999

March Sure Start application made for Rose Hill-Littlemore Sure Start, and accepted.
November Many Sure Start developments since March – budget of £3,000,000 over three years; consultation exercise re Sure Start Centre buildingember PEEP staff contributing to Sure Start Working Groups:
Children's Learning and Care Group, Management Development Group, Building Group; Health and Home Visiting Group; Equal Opportunities Group; also Steering Group and Stakeholder Forum.
Nov ember Sure Start Service Level Agreement with PEEP.
November Education Department Family Learning Strategy meeting.
December Sure Start St Nicholas procession.
December PEEP Director on Education Action Zone Forum.
December Work with Sure Start re management of new Centre issues.
December Director and Deputy Director to first meeting of County's 0-3s Strategy Group (later re-named 'Task Group').

2000

January First Sure Start discussion re transition of Steering Group to Management Board.
February Sure Start seminar in London. Focused on:
Extending Sure Start to children aged four-eight and their families.
Quality of provision for very young children

Possibility of routinely contacting first time parents during early pregnancy

Are Sure Start resources as currently configured likely to reach the most disadvantaged children and families?

February Work on a quality framework for the 0-3s Task Group.

April Meeting with Nursery School headteacher and chairperson of governors about PEEP at Wood Farm. They were particularly interested in replication and asked for process and costings. Will come to Visitors' Day in September.

May Visit from Bookstart representative in Slough: interest in PEEP materials/publications as an extension of their Bookstart Programme.

May Discussions with Early Years Advisor for Wirral re possibility of PEEP as part of Sure Start Birkenhead.

Chapter 7

'Collecting Evidence' is about the various aspects of monitoring and evaluation that have been a crucial part of the development of PEEP. It also refers to the studies that are beginning to provide evidence about whether PEEP makes a difference, and in what ways. What people have said is contained in chapter 8.

PEEP Research Consortium Meeting
Wednesday, the 11th of October 2000
9:15 - 9:45 Birth to School study in Seminar Room.
9:45 - 11:30 Research Consortium Meeting in Seminar Room.
AGENDA
1. Apologies.

Formation of the PEEP Research Consortium

Video camera on loan from Nottingham University

Evaluation Report: a turning point for the project's work with parents

Collecting Evidence

7

"For by earth we see earth, by water water;
By air bright air, and by fire brilliant fire."

EMPEDOCLES

DfEE funding for the 3s and 4s Study and the Birth to School Study

DfEE

Positive outcomes about PEEP parents' relationships with schools provided by reception teachers

1998 1999 2000

Chapter 7: Collecting evidence

When the formative evaluation of PEEP began in 1995, the need for summative evaluation seemed very far away. How we would know if PEEP 'worked' was overshadowed by the task of developing and piloting what PEEP was actually going to be. But after a couple of years this issue began to emerge as important for a range of reasons, and questions about PEEP research urgently needed resolution. It had become clear that 'doing PEEP' involved drawing on a range of disciplines in addition to education. Health, psychology and sociology were all relevant, and the problem seemed to be one of locating a director for the research with the right specialisms, who worked in a sufficiently flexible department for real collaborations to take place. After a long hunt and several false starts two people emerged who were able to help: Dr. Greg Brooks of the National Foundation for Educational Research to direct the Birth to School Study; and Professor Kathy Sylva.

Professor Sylva had recently come to Oxford from the London Institute, and proposed a PEEP Research Consortium as an 'umbrella group' for all research studies of PEEP. With her awareness of the increasing range of issues and complexities inherent in studying interventions such as ours, and her offer to PEEP Trustees to chair the Consortium, this solution has become an extremely practical, creative and satisfactory reality. I will always remember the enormous sense of relief I felt as we settled in to these arrangements and it became clear that this solution was really going to work.

I remember so clearly the exhilaration of gaining ethics permission. This was what we needed to be able to start PEEP and work with families and other providers like Health Visitors. The Nursing and Allied Professions Research Ethics Committee exists to protect families from intrusive or inappropriate research, and to ensure that proper procedures are adopted by researchers, and it was to this committee that we made our application. We had been struggling with the papers for so long, and were aware that if permission were to be refused we would be completely stuck. When, after a long and anxious meeting with the Ethics Committee we were finally granted permission to go ahead, it was like a door opening into a new landscape.

The Co-director came to see me in the Autumn of 1997 to ask if NFER might be interested in doing a long-term quantitative evaluation of PEEP. Well of course we would! Not only was PEEP immediately and obviously a well-designed, thoroughly-thought-through programme, but the opportunity to do a seven-year study of such importance arises very rarely.

1999 was the year when our hopes and fears for the funding of the long-term evaluation see-sawed. A charitable foundation first encouraged us, then turned us down; but long-term funding eventually was promised by the DfEE. But it had kept us on tenterhooks, especially the fieldworkers whose salaries depended wholly or partly on the research.

My research for my MA dissertation was about Asian families' involvement in PEEP. I interviewed several women in their homes about why they had stopped going to their PEEP groups. I remember one day very clearly. I interviewed two women that day, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. The women both started off by saying they were just too busy to come to the groups, but after a while they started to talk more about what it was like for them to live in Oxford. Both women talked to me about the terrible racism they and their families face every day. They told me in great detail the way they had suffered. 'That's why I don't go to PEEP,' said one woman, 'I don't want to sit with those people.' I was really shocked by what they told me and felt quite upset when I left the second interview. I think that PEEP has to take some responsibility in trying to help combat racism, which I believe it does. Also I had discovered that there may be very good reasons why people do not attend groups.

I remember visiting a young mother (single) with three children and one on the way living in an upstairs maisonette. She was working and I met her on her way home, quite exhausted. She was too weary after work for me to attempt the Bayley with her little girl but I interviewed the mother and was able to observe the child, who was busy 'reading' a book that the Health Visitor had given her as part of Bookstart. It was a 'Peepo' book (not the Ahlbergs) and she was saying 'Peepo!' to herself as she read it, at just two!

I remember the unexpected excitement of starting to run Parent User Groups. We talked about what parents thought and wanted, and what we were trying to do. Of course the parents who came were all very interested in PEEP but they were also very outspoken about the project and how they saw it, and it was challenging and enormously helpful. On one evening only one parent came – it turned out to be a key match in the World Cup! – and on another there were so many parents and children and so much to talk about that it was after ten before we left. With an eight o'clock start the next day I thought I could have done with a camp bed in the Centre. Looking back, these groups have been so important to the project's development.

Diary

1995

May – August Setting up OUDES Evaluation Study: purposes, what, how etc.

May – August Application for ethics permission, granted.

July Appointment of Research Assistant.

October Video camera on loan from Nottingham University.

1996

January Two Westminster College students at Swallows and Skylarks all this term.

January Evaluation Team meeting, re August report.

January Data shows parents' very positive reaction to PEEP:

Only three responses at the bottom of the scale ('not liked at all') and fifty responses at the top of the scale ('liked very much').

On the five-point scale, 'not very much' and 'not at all' accounted for twelve responses, 'OK' for twenty-seven, and 'quite a lot' and 'very much' for ninety-seven responses.

November Evaluation fieldworker priorities agreed for next term:

Observations of new Small and Nursery PEEPs

Definitions of PEEP families – what received? How much? When?

Impact of PEEP on parents

Issues:

a) Group Leaders as reflective practitioners

b) How far are playpacks affecting outcomes?

November Co-director at Colwen Trevarthen's talk re study (funded by Norway) about link between music and literacy development. 'The most important factor in the environment for brain development is other people.'

December Trustees' decisions about PEEP evaluation from April 97: to commission a range of formative evaluations from a variety of specialists; not therefore to renew the OUDES contract; to decide later (but soon) about an outcomes study (summative evaluation).

1997

January Discussions with Brookes MA student about combining her MA in Ed dissertation (on Asian families in the PEEP area) with reviewing PEEP equal opportunities – especially ethnic minority families.

March Local libraries count their under-fives membership in order to

compare with next year's membership after PEEP campaign (the fire in Feb '98 interrupted the comparison).

April Phase One evaluation, predominately formative, by OUDES ended (first two years of the project).

May Parent User Groups set up.

May Review of levels under way, especially Baby PEEP (0s) and Big PEEP (3s) in preparation for 'outcomes cohorts' beginning January '98.

June PEEP Research Consortium set up; chaired by Professor Kathy Sylva.

October Research Consortium work to set up two studies.

November Dr Greg Brooks at NFER to direct PEEP Birth to School study.

November Professor Kathy Sylva at Oxford University Department of Educational Studies to direct the Big PEEP study.

December Nursery Level Review.

1998

January Interviews for NFER research assistant, appointment made.

January Extension of ethics permission granted for NFER study.

January Visit from member of Oxford University Department of Experimental Psychology, re maths research.

February Review of other Literacy Programmes contributed by Medical Research Council Fellow working in the Oxfordshire Public Health Research Unit: very useful international overview of comparable evidence-based interventions.

March Director joined Oxfordshire Parenting Forum Evaluation group.

March Birth to School study set-up arrangements: ethics permission up-date, comparable area for control group (assistance from George Smith, Oxford University Dept. of Administrative Studies), and arrangements with the Horton General Hospital at Banbury re birth information.

April First Research Consortium Meeting; monthly meetings from now on.

April Start of recruitment of cohorts for the Birth to School study.

May Director met new Oxon LEA Literacy Strategy team.

May NFER Research Assistant's resignation for personal reasons: two new part-time fieldworkers recruited.

1999

April Birth to School Study gave presentation at Third International Early Years Conference, University of Warwick.

April Started Birth to School Study first birthday schedule interviews.

June Discussions re setting up formative evaluation of PEEP Link.

November Thinking about parents' feedback and how we can develop the collection of data for interim results pending the research reports.

November Research Consortium: Birth to School Study schedules and issue of impact of other interventions.

November Barnett House seminar on lessons from research. Search for measures for self-esteem, well-being etc that PEEP could use: possibility that measures are currently being developed, but issue of standardisation.

November Discussion on effects of long term PEEP attendance – new families very different from experienced families: implications for programme and work with schools.

December Seminar presentation at OUDES to the FEL Group, about PEEP research studies.

December OUDES Fieldworker re interim data collection about PEEP outcomes in Reception classes.

2000

February Small interim study begun of reception teachers' perceptions of PEEP children: but very problematic because of very many variables.

March Early Years Forum: Dr Kim Plunkett on Cognitive Neuroscience – structuring and function of the brain re cognitive development, especially language at eighteen – twenty-four months.

March Research meeting at DfEE. Research to proceed as planned. Steering Group to be set up to meet every term initially, then bi-annually.

March Research Consortium mainly about the second birthday schedule.

March Research meeting with Chairman of Advisory Group re overall plan for Birth to School Study with NFER and PEEP Research Consortium.

April OUDES Threes and Fours study cohort start to enter Nursery classes.

May First steering group meeting for DfEE funded research studies at the London Institute. Very positive beginning.

June Positive outcomes indicated by reception teachers re PEEP parents' relationships with schools.

Chapter 8

'What people have said' documents a selection of responses about PEEP from parents, staff and other providers. These responses show some early results, indicating the ways in which PEEP has affected people so far, although ultimately the research studies will provide more robust comparative data. 'What people have said' also refers to the times when PEEP staff have presented the project to local and national audiences.

1995 1996 1997

What people have said 8

Go with the people,
Live among them
Learn from them
Love them
Start with what they know
Build on what they have.

ANCIENT TAOIST POEM

Chapter 8: What people have said

"I thought PEEP sounded a bit weird when I first heard about it – a lot of my friends and family in Blackbird Leys did too. Singing and things. But I gave it a go. I think the groups are brilliant – it's really good fun and it made being a parent really interesting. It made me and my son much closer doing all those things together. He's at Nursery now. You can tell the kids who did PEEP when you go into the Nursery. They love books and stories and they are interested in everything. They listen and they are more confident about being there.

"I started attending PEEP when it started, one son was three and one was a baby. I continued being involved in PEEP meetings until my younger son went to Nursery in 1999. He is part of the research project, so the researcher still comes to visit us.

Through PEEP I gained confidence in my own ability as a parent. Talking to other parents who were going through similar problems and experiences really helped. It made me realise I was not alone. I also gained an insight into the development of children's early education and how much fun it can be. Both my children loved the stories, songs and activity packs. Even though they did not realise it, they all had an educational or developmental aspect to them. I realised that children could learn without them knowing it was work!

I gained the OCN qualification, 'Helping Children To Learn At Home' and along with other factors (both children at school or nursery, looking at going back to work full time and my father dying), I started to look at my future. What would I be doing? Would it challenge me? The confidence in my ability with children and having been given the chance to see how children learn made me consider teaching. I had 'A' levels, but no teaching qualifications. When my son started school, I decided to help in the classroom, just as a parent, to see whether I thought I would like teaching and be able to do it.

In 1998 I started a four year degree course in Primary Education, with maths as my specialist subject. I am now in my third year and I have enjoyed every minute of it, even though it has been very hard work. The discussions at PEEP groups and the experience I gained in attending the sessions have helped me enormously with my college

work and in the classroom setting.

At my interview to gain a place, I was asked about PEEP and hopefully I managed to convey the purpose and valuable experience it gave me. It certainly helped with my choice of career.

S I love the tapes of your music – it's the best present for friends with babies!

F I took my son along from twelve weeks until six months old when his grandmother continued to take him.
It would never have occurred to me to show a book to a three-month-old. (I probably would have started around a year old). I'll never forget the intent concentration he had on 'storytime' from the time he was five months old, then as soon as he could sit up he would be drawn by the books and stories and sit quite happily still, listening to the story and watching the pictures.

It also provided a good base for interaction with other children.

F The PEEP training course was particularly useful and being free and in the evenings meant it was available to anyone. PEEP has always been so open, no 'clicky-ness or certain people not fitting in.' The only negative side of PEEP I found were two members of staff who came across as patronising and generally condescending. 'Doing their bit for the less educationally privileged.' I am sure this was not their intention, and that their intentions were entirely meant to be helpful, but they were rather over the top.

F If it wasn't for Thursday afternoons, I'd just be a doss – I'd go to pieces.

F I was drawn into Sure Start through PEEP, and at the beginning of Sure Start I was constantly thinking of an excuse to get out of it – I was daunted by the red tape. I couldn't help wondering if it was never going to happen – never going to be as good as it says.

Now it's *real*. That's what gets me enthused. Everyone working together was a hard thing to grasp – now I begin to get the spirit of it. It doesn't just come overnight, you have to be <u>part</u> of it to understand it.

F When I was pregnant I was reading a lot, preparing myself to deal with the child. I wanted to know about everything. I wanted something to help me understand the conscious child and how to

help my child develop. I didn't know that PEEP existed. When I received the letter from PEEP, I jumped 'My God this is what I wanted.' I had no family or other support here.

When I attended the first session I realised if you want a child to be happy and calm how much a mother needs to be happy, calm and relaxed. I learned how to play, touch and feel and enjoy being with my child. I learned the importance of movement and song. The first time we came back from PEEP, she had a deep and relaxed sleep, which is a lovely memory for me. I gained confidence that I could cope with the early months and child behaviour.

I learned children have lots of abilities and if we give them opportunities to explore and practise them, and to go out and talk about things. They are not just a plant that we water. We have to give them opportunity.

I wrote and told my family about PEEP. If I go back to Pakistan, I will set up a project like PEEP there.

F I especially remember learning about body language. A very young child doesn't speak so you have to notice them and what they want to express. We talk fast and don't realise a child is listening slowly. All the material (in the training) was very helpful.

F It would be nice to be able to visit PEEP when you feel a need to go out, when you want materials or advice.

PEEP needs to focus on demonstrating PEEP's philosophy the way it works and be as open as a drop-in.

So you could come in and meet with other parents and use the PEEP materials. More than just a family centre – something that promotes PEEP philosophy.

Give parents more access to scrap and scrap workshops.

Could PEEP make someone available to do counselling for parents – make sure they get the help they need? Parents don't always feel good about themselves and PEEP could help them with this.

F My son is now eighteen months old, but I started taking him to PEEP when he was six weeks old. When someone from the PEEP team contacted me to ask if we would attend I immediately thought it was something like a toddler group.

However I decided to take him and was immediately very impressed. I think we have only missed three PEEP sessions in all the time he has been attending. I have recommended it to other friends who are also now attending.

I feel it is particularly good for the children to mix with other adults

and children from such a young age. I also feel that the early introduction to books is very beneficial. In fact, I read my son two stories before bedtime every evening and he will often pick up a book and pretend to read out loud as I do! He also really enjoys looking at the pictures.

I think it is a marvellous opportunity for all those taking part and I hope (and feel sure it will) achieve its goals. I think it is wonderful to see children from such a young age mixing with others of very different backgrounds so easily (which 's just how it should be in my opinion). I also think it is very good that they do not even seem to notice if they look different and just play alongside one another very well. I feel that children now can benefit from knowledge of many different cultures.

I feel it is very important for children to do as much exploring, playing and talking as possible. I agree that children learn and imitate what is going on around them. They want to know what the world is and how it all works. Parents are so very important at this very early age. I have chatted to my son constantly since he was born. As soon as he could, he talked back. Even though at first it made no sense to me, I pretended it did!

I have read at least one bedtime story to my son every day. He now really seems to like books. I showed him an alphabet book yesterday when we were out shopping. He opened it and pointed to a picture of a dog and said 'dog' and to a picture of a car and said ' car' – of course I had to buy it! I feel children can respond to books and stories from an early age. I have some crayons and paper, which I offered to my son at a very early age. I think now though, I must start to offer them more often as I think he will be interested in trying to write or draw. I shall also start to involve him in writing the shopping list.

I have tried to keep a note of my son's first recognisable words. Obviously some of them were the usual ones such as Da Da (Dad). One useful one is 'Gone' complete with open hands shown to me when he has finished his food! Thinking about numeracy now, I have always counted the stairs up and down as he and I climbed them since he was born. When we go shopping I count the oranges into the bag etc. We count toys and all sorts of other things. I agree that it does seem that children can be rushed with maths and it is important that they do learn the basics of units, tens and hundreds early. Also, I feel that repetition is very important when children are starting to talk, read and learn numbers.

F Throughout this course (the PEEP evening Foundation Course) I have found it to offer a fascinating insight into how PEEP works.

Care has been taken to ensure all the PEEP stances on issues were portrayed clearly, and we understood why they were taken. I feel I have gained a valuable understanding of child development which I can use towards my own son, the play group for which I am chairperson, my college course in sessional crèche care, and also in my job in child care which will result from the fore-mentioned studying, and training. I only wish we could have studied for longer, as the course has sparked an interest into child development in me.

In my own experience PEEP has given me ideas and confidence. These have reflected on my children, by them wanting to learn more, and always asking the questions of who, what, where and why – and always wanting to read or play games such as 'I Spy', 'What Colour?' and 'How Many?' when we go anywhere.

I remember going to a group for first time. I had managed twenty people and been in charge, and then, having been in charge, having nothing. But having a baby. Responsibility seemed to be taken away from me as I was not at work and now at home. I lost my confidence and felt no one was in charge. At PEEP you begin to feel part of a group and get your confidence back. I was persuaded to do PEEP training and have now done a further four courses: Child Health and Development, Who Said Kids was Easy?, Living and Working with Under Eights, and the Creche Workers course. I am now a PEEP assistant for two groups. PEEP worked for me – *definitely*.

I first heard about PEEP when I received a letter inviting me and my daughter, who was then three months old, to a group starting September '95. I was very curious to know what PEEP was. In the beginning this was unclear. The idea that a group of parents and their babies would meet each week to sit in a circle and sing songs and rhymes came firstly as a shock to me then the feeling of embarrassment – would I really be able to hold my baby and sing to her in a group setting?

After seeing the look on those tiny faces around the room – the answer was simply yes of course! I became much more confident with my family – and am much more aware of the quality time I spend with them. Through PEEP my daughter has had more opportunities to further develop her love of stories, rhymes, singing which were introduced at a very early age – from birth!

I think it is this experience that has given my daughter the best start to her life. Of course there are many other ways that PEEP has helped me and my family.

It has provided group experiences for myself as much as for my child. We were both very shy at the beginning, but this is not the case now. I have returned to full-time work, now at the school. The opportunity to meet and make new friends has continued, as has the relationship with PEEP staff who have always been a good source of support and information.

It has provided resources for us to use at home: books and playpacks to borrow each week. My daughter has really enjoyed choosing herself a play-pack and a book to take home for the week. The music tapes and scrap materials have been helpful to my older children as well.

The Yellow Book has been a wonderful diary for me to fill in and look back on, and also it has been a source of information from PEEP with special Yellow Book pages of ideas for activities at home.

F I go to PEEP with both my sons and I think it is a very good idea. I think they both benefit from spending time with children of their own age. PEEP's approach to child development has helped me understand how children develop and that not all children develop at the same rate. They also gave me lots of ideas and advice about how to help my child's development using games and songs and rhymes. In the PEEP training the talk on body language was very interesting and made you think about the way you come across to children.

F When I was at school I think I would have been one of the children who was behind in Literacy. I found I was good with numbers so I concentrated on that. So when my first son was born I did worry about how I could help him to do better than I did. I only started going to PEEP when he was three but now wish I had started earlier. I have found that PEEP has not only helped my sons but also helped me to understand how best to help them. I think that PEEP is very important to this community and am very grateful for the help and advice they have given me.

I think it would be good for PEEP to have bigger advertising – maybe using large colour posters of the children and words such as 'Come and enjoy songs and rhymes, everyone welcome.' I think a lot of people have heard of PEEP but don't really know what it does or how it works.

As for PEEP's long-term future, I think the future looks very good. With more funding they can then expand into more areas. I have talked to friends about PEEP, and they think it sounds good and would like the opportunity to attend a group. PEEP has been very good for

my own children and it would be nice if all pre-school children could have the chance to benefit from attending PEEP.

F PEEP in action is an easy and relaxed way of helping parents and carers to help their children. The parent or carer learns with the child and so both gain self-esteem and enjoyment out of the weekly hour-long sessions.

The effect so far on my own child is that we both enjoy the session, and it makes him feel special. At home we enjoy our special time together just reading or playing games. He enjoys the books and play packs more because he has chosen them. He enjoys looking at the letters and numbers now and he tries to copy the words and tries to read the book himself. I feel that he will settle into school better and he won't feel that things are out of his capabilities. He has become very confident about books and things around him.

If a parent or carer wants to speak to a Group Leader about a problem they can do so, knowing that it will be in confidence and nothing will be repeated to any other person. This enables all families to relax and enjoy their sessions more knowing whatever is discussed will not go any further. In all the PEEP sessions I have attended, this has worked well and the atmosphere is good. Each parents or carer accepts other families no matter what the make up of the other family may be.

I think families can gain so much from each other, meeting people who are in different types of families. As I got to know these families I began to understand and appreciate their values and make up, which were very varied. I think I was very lucky to meet these people and be given a chance to get to know them. They gave me a greater awareness of other families. I try to teach my own children to understand and value all families whatever their make up might be.

F I had not realised how much children learn through role modelling eg writing a shopping list or reading a paper or reading instructions on a packet. I am much more relaxed about reading to my children and will make up my own stories for my children. We make up our own books now, which I never did with my two older ones at a younger age. I am more aware now that the most simple and important tasks are helping with the language and literacy.

Here are some ideas for PEEP:

- PEEP could extend to other areas which would benefit from extra input, like Barton and Wood Farm.

- PEEP could run through some of the school holidays. This would encourage the older children in the family to participate more with songs and rhymes and stories with the younger children.
- PEEP could sell its project to other areas. This could then benefit so many more families, as long as the PEEP program was followed to the letter.

It would be nice if PEEP extended its age range to seven. I know it would benefit the parents and carers more. They would be able to help and support their children more for the first two years of school life, because it would be helpful to understand the school curriculum better. This could be done in conjunction with the school or perhaps a term's worth of evening courses with PEEP.

I think children need to be given the opportunity to build their self-esteem. This may be achieved in a simple task such as putting their socks on alone. When they manage the task, their self-image improves and they move towards being more like their ideal-self, that is getting dressed like a grown-up. Their self-esteem has been boosted. The parents will then recognise the child's effort and success and praise them and tell other people about the achievement too. Further interaction such as choosing appropriate clothes together will further build the child's self-esteem. Children also need to see that their parent's own self-esteem is high so they can model themselves on them. PEEP recognises the importance of this point and gives parents the opportunity to build their self-esteem through further learning. All parents can study for the PEEP certificate, as well as helping them to find out about other areas of community education.

I've found the ORIM model extremely interesting and wish I had come across it when my children were smaller (now ten, eight, six, four). I'm sure that this model is generally true for most situations and families – it certainly is in my case. At present I'm helping the older children with cooking. I make sure they have the ingredients and a recipe which will work, and leave them to it. This gives them the chance to work at their own speed and try to understand the instructions. I know that they've got to a stage where they need to experiment and make decisions of their own. They get a lot of praise from everyone for their efforts (and see it eaten) and the failures are tried and we try to work out what went wrong. The younger ones obviously need more help, but given the opportunity and plenty of encouragement, can manage a great deal on their own. I do not think the ORIM model needs to be limited to pre-school. Everyone needs to be given opportunities to try new things and especially given the chance to make mistakes and learn from them. . Parents can do a lot

by praising honesty and supporting a child, no matter what mistakes they have made. Also it's important to be a good role model as someone who can say sorry when they've gone wrong.

Groups like PEEP are an ideal way for families to meet. There is a shared point of interest (children, books, early education etc) and a neutral venue where people can talk openly and freely.

Memories from Nursery Level

What parents have said

- We played hopscotch this morning. Sometimes we put numbers in and sometimes we put letters in.
- I took photos of the games that my daughter had set up with her dolls. She made a book from photos.
- We played the 'B' alphabet game at home, finding the letters for her/his name. It was a huge success.
- He loves reading the NO SMOKING sign on the bus.
- We have a little desk set up at home all the time with writing things on.
- He read out the Somerfield sign the other day. I was amazed.
- My daughter loves flap books. She makes her own, sticking flaps on.
- She's singing the alphabet song at home all the time.
- My son told me he had put a message in a bottle so I asked what he had written and he said his phone number.
- Both Dad and my son were in the 'dog house'. My son went upstairs and came down later with a card saying 'lv' (obviously 'love').
- When we were putting away my son's toys before bed he was singing the alphabet song with his own words:

  'D is for Dinosaur that goes roar, roar, roar.

  T is for Teddy I cuddle in bed'.

- You can hear her and her cousin competing as to who can read the

most signs, like exit and no smoking, or symbols on cans.

▲ We made a map together of our garden. She knew all the things that had to go in, even the gate.

S 'You're the PEEP lady,' said one little boy greeting me in one of the nursery classes, 'I like PEEP.' This is something that has been said to me by children, with variations of course, throughout my time in PEEP Nurseries, eg 'Hello Mrs PEEP', 'Is it PEEP today? Good.', 'When is it PEEP?', 'My mum's coming to PEEP.' Children's engagement with PEEP has been a joy to see.

Children's enthusiasm is a good starting point for parental involvement. Adults will relate to their children's interests and enjoyment.

S In January 1999 I was running a Threes group in the ballroom in Rose Hill Community Centre. I remember a dad saying 'Doing PEEP has made me realise that I don't have to do it with my children the way my dad did it to me.' It was quite a moment. It hadn't been an easy group to get going – it had lapsed as a PEEP group and needed rebuilding. Now it seemed worth running even such a small group – apart from the opportunity to be in the playgroup all morning and do a big circle time.

The previous month I had gone up to London with the Programme Delivery Co-ordinator and given a talk at the National Children's Bureau on 'Circles of Learning'. It was all about how PEEP sought to break the cycle of deprivation by intervening to support parents of very young children and turn a vicious circle to a virtuous one. It will be a tremendous achievement if we can help people give to their children something which they didn't receive as a child. We can do that by recognising the positive and valuing what parents give to their children every day.

PEEP can work ... and often does.

S I will never forget stories being told (with great vigour) by the Director in candlelight – 'The Mousehole Cat'? and by the Groups Co-ordinator – 'We're going on a Bear Hunt'. Brilliant storytellers, really bringing the books to life! We should keep up the story telling for adults as well as the children.

S I remember an Asian mother with a child of twenty months. I visited her in September 1995 having been put in contact by a teacher at Rose Hill First School. She seemed interested during the

home visit, but never came to the group.

Then in 1997 she had seen the Family Centre group (Small PEEP – for ones and twos) happening when she was there one day, and is now coming to a group, intending to be a regular. She has started the training, and would like to work in the project as well as bringing her child. She said 'You have to *see* it working to understand what it is about'. She had thought it was just a sort of parent and toddler group before. She also says that it has made her realise that she *does* do a lot of important things already with her children about their learning.

S I think PEEP is just great; I wish I'd had it when my kids were little.

I just love doing my groups – it's going well. When it goes badly, I want to get back in there and do it again; when it goes well, I can't wait 'til next week.

S One dad who works nights brought the children to PEEP instead of going to bed, because they enjoy it so much, he said.

S I used to be so unsure of myself. It was a really big thing coming to a PEEP group – but now I don't mind. I feel much more confident in any group and I'm doing other things too now. But it's all down to PEEP – it all started there.

S Through attending training sessions over the years and learning about supporting parents and their children I have been inspired to further my own education – and increase my own knowledge of learning. I feel that working for PEEP has been a rewarding and valuable experience and has helped me to bring up and encourage my own daughter, even though she is a teenager.

S After attending PEEP sessions with my baby I have always had a sense of belonging to PEEP and had always taken an interest in its activities. So I was over the moon to be appointed to the post of National Development Officer.

S I remember discussing in the Spring of 1997 whether we should have a PEEP newsletter, and wondering whether it would really help us to achieve our aims. We realised it would be a lot of work, but thought we'd try it. Three years on we are still producing a newsletter each term and it has become quite an institution. Now parents and staff produce them jointly and they make great reading.

We started Parent User Groups in 1997 as a way of parents and staff sharing information, ideas and feedback. There was one evening when we'd got everything ready and were expecting the usual dozen or so. But the Centre was silent and no one came ... and I sat there wondering what had happened. Eventually one dad arrived, apologising for being late and saying it had been hard to tear himself away from such a crucial World Cup match!

In 1998 we has some good discussions. Here are some of the things to emerge:

Why do you come to PEEP?

To get new ideas (things to do at home)
To meet other people
To get out of the house for an hour
So that children can mix with other children
The borrowing
'We enjoy it'
Undisturbed time with children
Makes me stop and think about them
The songs
Interest in how children learn (play patterns)
To realise you're not alone
Scrap ideas
To see group leaders
To help parents learn (eg book making)
Good for only children
Makes me think how I deal with my son – keeps me on the ball
Something we do together
Loves listening to stories
For the circle time – a way of getting to know songs
Helps to focus on your relationship with your child
Learning about their development
To use facilities and scrap box
Like to see child's enjoyment at circle time
Can bring younger ones – not made to feel they're a nuisance (even when they are!)
Find your child doing same things as others – not strange
Packs and books

What don't you like?

Too much talking more singing
Too much singing – rather talk
Problem of siblings with toys in playgroups (we go in for circle time and he wants to rush about and play)
Would like to bring our own topics to group when we feel the need (eg worries about children's upbringing)
Non-flexible timing (playgroup PEEP) – having to stop talk time for circle time if playgroup waiting)
Circle time in playgroups better with only PEEP children and parents
Rules – do we have to do them every term, can they be written down and handed out – (except for child protection one)
Rules – PEEP rule on no smacking
Tapes – 'Only one voice' Words and tones not always what a child already knows. Group Leader doesn't always sing what's on the tape
Small – PEEP range of borrowing packs not challenging enough
Time and day – with two children in PEEP one always misses out
Sometimes had to stay, but can't get home – back in time

What would make it better?

Opportunity to buy Special Books
More Dads in the group – and Nans
Having a free-standing PEEP group at Blackbird Leys Playgroup instead of integrating with Playgroup
Would be good to have more formal summary of what we've covered in past three weeks – and at half-term and end of term
More choice in range of packs
Having User Group in the afternoon/daytime
Having a crèche at Parent User Group
Continue throughout the holidays (list of holiday activities for 0-5 years would be useful)
Book Fair once a term/year with opportunity to buy half price books
Making it more fun
Doing more things
Longer sessions
Talking time a bit longer
Odd time and could start straight away
Once a term letting older PEEP children come in and do something together

What ways has PEEP made a difference at home?

Made parents more aware of their child's progress
Wide range of books available for child – encouraged some families to join the library
More ideas of things to do
I watch my child more
I notice milestones
We do more together
We share books more
Pay more attention to my child's play
PEEP is especially good for first child because has more time to spend with them
PEEP good for second and third children because have 'a special time' which might be missed
Enjoy books more
Speech of one child improved
Good preparation for playgroup/Nursery as children are used to responding in a group
It means we can sing songs together at home – helps to know the tune
Like using book packs
Encourages you to read more
Chance to experiment with new things/games
Encourages use of imagination
Enjoy playing with your child
Circle time – learning rhymes
Think of things you hadn't thought of before
Using scrap – making more at home – have a cupboard all to themselves

Every time we have a PEEP article in print (or a television or radio slot) I can't help thinking *everyone* will have read or seen it! In reality *so* few people actually do that maybe all the effort is disproportionate – and yet once we were offered a grant of around £100,000 because someone way back in the process had read such an article!

In 1987 I was in my first teaching job in a Nursery class in a school in Blackbird Leys. I initiated 'allowing' children to choose books to take home. A child wanted to take the book we'd just shared. His mother became very tense, her eyes filled with tears, eventually she said 'I can't, if I do he'll find out I can't read. It's bad enough now, but it's going to get worse in September, when he goes to school. He's

going to really find out about me, I was too stupid for them to teach me to read.' (She had been at the same school.)

I reassured her that sharing the book by talking about the pictures would be really enjoyable for her son.

I went on to work as a special needs teacher all over the Oxford City area but throughout these eleven years I often thought of this mother and her son. What had happened? How could teachers (I was now so proud to be one) and the 'system' have failed her, and what could be done to stop that continuing to happen? Now as a parent fearful of what her son would learn, and feeling ashamed of herself – how would that affect their relationship, and her son's learning?

I'd met the Director whilst training and as soon as I heard about PEEP I thought I want to be part of that, to work in Blackbird Leys and Rose Hill in a different way than I had and was now with special needs children. When I was offered the job of a Baby Group Leader I sang all the way home. I long for PEEP's approach to be used all over the country as part of teacher training courses, and also as part of LEA's provision for Under Fives; so that all teachers are more aware of the importance of sharing a PEEP curriculum with babies and their carers. Parents are more aware of their skills as educators, have more fun with their children and understand their babies and help them reach their potential by enjoying songs and books from birth.

The ORIM approach could be part of every teacher training course. It really works. It helps parents to value themselves as their children's first educators, and to realise that they do not need any particular skills to help their child learn.

My overall memories are of the extraordinary strength (there must be a better word, but I can't think of it!) of PEEP and the national profile it has attracted. Wherever there is a mention of the work, or a visit has been made or the video has been viewed there is universal acclaim. This enthusiasm is at all levels – the Select Committee changed the age range of its inquiry after a visit, and some mothers in a deprived areas who were shown the video said, 'That is what we want here.'

Diary

1995

1995 – 1996 Annual Report conclusion

'An important aspect of the project in its first year has been the information and thinking of the evaluation team, whose work has focused on important issues for the PEEP team to address. Foremost among these have been the project's strategies for working with parents, and the activities and interactions provided in PEEP sessions and by materials. The PEEP team are particularly aware of the need to work more directly and explicitly with parents about their children's learning.

The decision of the project to focus mainly on group work with parents was made for a variety of reasons, some of them to do with outcomes that follow from this way of working (for instance mutual support and sharing of expertise between parents). The evaluation team has highlighted the difficulties of dealing with PEEP curriculum issues in group settings, rather than in the home. It is clear that group leaders' and parents' perceptions and use of Yellow Book pages and guidelines, and of "talking times", are the areas which are most challenging to deal with and which will need continuous monitoring and adjustment.

PEEP's approach to working with parents echoes some conclusions of HOPE, a project first launched in 1968 in Appalachia in the United States. To quote from a follow-up study of HOPE (Gotts '89):

"Conventional wisdom would have favoured a school-based pre-school experience as being more effective. However, conventional wisdom ignores the contribution of parents to their children's school success... It is important to recognise, however, that while parents improved their practices, they did not become different in a fundamental sense... What changed was only the frequency and consistency with which HOPE parents engaged in these practices."

This approach proposes working with parents and other adults in a structured way about their children's home learning, by valuing and extending what they already do with their children. PEEP's early start, regular sessions, use of music, and the continuity of sessions from birth to five all may help to promote positive outcomes.

Two aspects of the PEEP intervention that do not feature frequently in other literacy projects are the use of music, and the work with babies and their parents from birth. And yet the development of the intimate

relationship – between mother and baby, and other important adults – is significantly enhanced by the secure structure and emotional richness of many songs, rhymes and stories in the first years of life. This is the seed-bed for the parent-child interactions which are the foundations of literacy.'

1996

September Much time spent planning and setting up publicity events: book distribution and Reading Is Fundamental, PEEP in the Barn, media visitors to groups, PEEP Open Day. (Involved people, materials, timings, places.)

September Distributed c 1000 fliers for PEEP in the Barn and display in Meeting Room.

October Director wrote piece in TES, about schemas.

October Publicity Week (including whole day event 'PEEP in the Barn'; Open Day at the Centre attended by parents, local workers, councillors, local press and radio; interviews with national media including The Independent, TES and Woman's Hour).

October Thames Valley Radio – live interview with Group Leader and parents; explaining PEEP very well, both rationale and strategies including activities at home.

October TES reporter and photographer for whole day.

October Short piece for Challenge 2000.

October Maureen O'Connor doing piece for Independent.

October For next term, starting to think about: Number of groups of various sorts – group staff, resources, and home visitors.

November Woman's Hour interviews with parents, PEEP staff and Peers School Headteacher.

November Director did talk and workshop about PEEP at 'Citizen of Europe' conference.

November Series of meetings with parents about PEEP.

1996 – 1997 Annual Report conclusion

'Since the very earliest planning days of the project there has been a high level of interest from people who are involved in some way with one or more of the following concerns:

- Raising educational attainment
- Breaking the cycle of deprivation
- Long-term crime prevention.

These concerns are generally recognised as some of the most urgent and fundamentally important enquiries of our time. They are certainly all high on the agenda of our new national government. At the present

time we have some first indications from evaluators and parents that PEEP can make a difference, and so constitute one of the strategies so urgently needed for dealing with these concerns.

The challenges for PEEP now include:

- To continue to develop a programme which is effective both in content and delivery, building on the principles described above.
- To develop further a model which can be used elsewhere.
- To monitor and evaluate the processes involved.
- To ensure that the advantages of PEEP are equally available to all those children and families who are entitled to them.
- To plan and implement a research study which will provide solid evidence of outcomes.
- To establish how PEEP's work with the parents and carers of pre-school children, and with pre-school staff, will be sustained and developed beyond the initial life of the project.
- To succeed in attracting the funding which will enable these things to be done effectively.

The full potential of the relationship between parents (who have particular expertise about their own child) and early childhood education staff (who have particular expertise in child development and the process of learning) is very rarely exploited to the full. This is particularly the case in the child's first year, when the rate of learning is fastest. Parents often feel isolated in their crucially important new role. PEEP is working to support parents; to make the most of the early years and to give their children a flying start at school. Who knows what we would see if we could take a "PEEP" into the future?'

1997

April PEEP 'good practice' video – edited clips of group activities for 1995-97 (very home-made, zero budget).

May PEEP presentation to Government Office for the South East (GOSE) seminar on 'Early Interventions for Long-Term Crime Prevention', for heads of services.

May Parent User Groups set up.

June First PEEP Newsletter.

September Thames Valley Early Intervention Forum

October 'Book Week': PEEP Exhibition in Macclesfield House foyer (LEA offices).

November PEEP article published in 'Oxford Parent Guide' (Oxford County Newspapers).

November OCC Performance and Quality Sub-Committee:

presentation by Director on PEEP progress and plans.

November Filming week for PEEP video ' Beginning with PEEP'.
It explains the PEEP levels and tells the story of four PEEP families, both in their groups and at home.
The following issues were evident at each level:
Interactions between carers and children
Adults sharing experiences and problems in talking time
The curriculum focus.
Copies of the video are available on loan to all potential and current PEEP families and to other early years workers in the PEEP area; they are also for sale, available from the PEEP Centre.

November Teletubbies filming of PEEP family.

December Video editing and completion. Copies ready for distribution in January.

1997 – 1998 Annual Report conclusion

'This year has seen a considerable expansion of PEEP work, with a consequent need for new staff and organisational and physical arrangements. The last annual report looked forward to six challenges for PEEP which have guided the work in the period covered by this report. These were:

- To continue to develop PEEP as a sustainable transferable model, according to its aims and principles.
- To monitor and evaluate the processes involved.
- To ensure that PEEP will be available to all those children and families who are entitled to it.
- To facilitate the planning and implementation of a research study which will provide solid evidence of outcomes.
- To establish how PEEP's work with the parents and carers of pre-school children, and with pre-school staff, will be sustained and developed beyond the initial life of the project.
- To succeed in attracting the funding which will enable these things to be done effectively.

A year later the perspective is both wider and more detailed. The project is past the "early development" phase and needs now to take further the processes we have begun of monitoring, reviewing and refining its ongoing work. This process is an essential precursor to the originally envisaged end point of PEEP in the year 2000, when we shall have developed a model that can be accessed on a wider scale either immediately or at some later date.

A great deal of progress has been made with these challenges, but there is still much to do. The main focus of the work in the coming year has been referred to at the end of "Future Development".

Our hope is that it will be possible thoroughly to complete and to research this essentially innovative work over the first few years of the new millennium; while at the same time piloting an expanded version of PEEP both locally and elsewhere in the UK.'

1998

February Contacting five CEOs re up-take for PEEP if funding available.

February PEEP Certificate Fair and video launch a successful event, attended by 200 families, Community Education providers' exhibition, Andrew Smith MP and Graham Badman CEO.

February Visit from retired Head of Inspection at OFSTED indicates continuing interest in PEEP at national level.

March Visit from Director of NCB Early Childhood Unit, and Director of Dept. of Social Services and Social Policy Research, Oxford University (also PEEP Advisory Group).

March Visit from worker at Wolvercote Community Education: interested in running PEEP-type groups in rural area near Henley, 'The First Wednesday Group'.

May Director to Cambridge Institute to give seminar about PEEP.

May Visit from Director of Curriculum in South Australia. She emphasised PEEP's role in laying the ground for the future relationship between parents and schools.

May Start of monthly PEEP Visitors' Days.

November NCB talk, 'Circles of Learning'.

1998 – 1999 Annual Report conclusion

'People often ask whether PEEP makes a difference. It is too soon to claim solid evidence – we are dependent on the NFER Birth to School Study for that. However, one of the most frequent anecdotal comments is about the enormous increase in confidence that PEEP brings to both parents and young children. Another relates to the way in which the very youngest children respond to songs and rhymes and shared activities, and are so readily engrossed in books. Parents themselves frequently comment that they feel less isolated and more aware of their child's achievements because of their involvement with PEEP.

Feedback from parents about their children most usually relates to their children's genuine deep-rooted love of books, to their children's ability to remember songs and rhymes, and to how much they and their children enjoy doing PEEP activities together.

A local infant teacher's comments on PEEP children focus particularly on their ability to listen and to talk about what is happening, on their general competence and confidence, and

particularly on their use of books at school. During the coming year PEEP will be gathering more information from reception teachers now that increasing numbers of PEEP children are reaching school.

The Government's new Sure Start Fund, announced in 1998, has begun to have a major impact on the context in which PEEP works. There is increasing recognition of the importance of working with parents/carers of 0-3s. "Rose Hill-Littlemore Sure Start" has been invited to develop a Delivery Plan as one of the very first "trailblazer" projects, with PEEP as the lead partner. The PEEP Trustees have agreed to take interim responsibility for this Sure Start project until its own Management Board can be appointed.

The development of marketable materials, of the Handbook and training courses raises many opportunities for the future dissemination and transfer of PEEP. During the coming year, PEEP Trustees will be making some important decisions about their aims for the direction of PEEP in the first decade of the new century.'

1999

January Publications Assistant in post.
January Various conference presentations for PEEP, and Sure Start.
January Visit to PEEP by Margaret Hodge, Under-Secretary of State for Employment and Equal Opportunities.
January Presentation at Third International Conference at Warwick University.
January Annual Reports for 1998 –1999 printed; the great majority sent out in response to requests.
November Paper: Phonological Awareness in PEEP Programme.
November New model for Visitors' Day.
November Talk by Director: 'Values in Education'.
November Group leader made presentation about PEEP to Headington Nursery School Annual Meeting for Parents.
December Visit from Professor of Education, Melbourne, Australia.

1999 – 2000 Annual Report conclusion

'A group of colleagues from Higher Education, Public Health, the Local Education Authority, retired HMI (Her Majesty's Inspectorate) and PEEP met recently to consider the rationale for continuing PEEP in the Peers School area as a "generation" project over, say, a further twenty-five years. To do this would mean that PEEP would be available to the 0s – 4s currently in the project who remain in the area if they themselves become parents.

In the wide-ranging discussion some recurring themes emerged including the importance of a long-term approach to this kind of work,

together with the advisability of attempting to identify what are the factors in the programme that make the most difference. A new focus seems to be emerging on the possibility of significant outcomes in parents and carers of PEEP children which would impact positively on parenting skills, community capacity and social inclusion factors. Transition to a "generation" project would of course rely on the continuation of the current programme at its present level until 2005, for which funding is being sought.

Over the last year Peers PEEP (in the Peers School area) has continued to develop; it has gained a positive reputation beyond its own area; there is anecdotal qualitative evidence that PEEP is making a positive difference to children and their families; discussions are taking place in relation to disseminating and replicating PEEP; and opportunities are arising to enable the argument for public funding to go forward. These factors indicate that the "vision" of a generation project to support families with the youngest children in disadvantaged areas may possibly be an appropriate important objective to pursue in the future.'

2000

February Lord Lt. of Oxfordshire visited re funding for publications, and about publishing in the medium and long-term.

March Oxfordshire Parenting Forum Conference.

March Visit from Children's Rights Commissioner for Save the Children.

March Invitation to Director to speak at National Literacy Trust conference in November relating to public policy and funding for early literacy interventions.

March Oxfordshire Early Years Forum: Dr Kim Plunkett on Cognitive Neuroscience – structuring and function of the brain re cognitive development, especially language at eighteen-twenty-four months.

March Visitors from Sweden.

March Select Committee visit to PEEP and Sure Start.

May Visit from Queensland researcher who has been touring America and Europe and says she has found no other programme like PEEP.

May Visit from Mike Cornfield (Parents as Children's First Teachers and Educators).

June 'Memory Lane' Day for all staff and other involved in PEEP 1995-2000.

July Visitors from South Africa, Macedonia and Liverpool.

This diary ends in July 2000, eight months before it will be time to write a new annual report for 2000 – 2001. It is tantalising to wonder what progress and events may be reflected in that future conclusion.

Chapter 9

'What have we learned?' starts by looking at what seems to have worked well. These are things for PEEP to continue to develop. A very great deal has been learned from three challenging issues which occupy the main content of this chapter, and which generate 'resolutions' for PEEP in Phase Two.

What have we learned?

Books are like mountaintops jutting out of the sea. Self-contained islands though they may seem, they are upthrusts of an underlying geography that is at once local and, for all that, a part of a universal pattern. And so, while they inevitably reflect a time and a place, they are part of a more general intellectual geography.

JEROME BRUNER

Chapter 9: What have we learned?

Collecting and sorting all this material has proved to be a thought-provoking process. One of the main purposes was to enable us to look back over our achievements and mistakes and reflect on them. So first of all, what have we done that seems to have worked well?

First, we have realised that the emphasis on *songs and rhymes and stories* has been a wonderful strategy for a variety of reasons. These include their impact on language development and on social and emotional development; their universal appeal across cultures and language barriers; more pragmatically their use as a group management strategy; and of course sheer enjoyment and delight for so many children and adults. The investment in audio-tapes and song-books for every child and family has been worth every penny – as indeed has been the investment in books and play-packs for borrowing.

Second, it seems that a respectful *offering* of relevant and appropriate information and ideas has been far more effective than a more didactic, instructional approach. In using the University of Sheffield's ORIM structure to build up the programme with parents and carers in the pilot groups, and in focusing on children's play-patterns, we have been acknowledging and valuing and building on what is already there.

Thirdly, in terms of training and support we have invested heavily in *supporting staff*, right from the beginning. We knew that the project would stand or fall on the quality of its staff, and that although books, play-packs, equipment and many other things were vital, the work of the staff – and especially of the group leaders – was of the first importance. All our experience has confirmed that this focus on staff support has been crucial in the development of the project.

Fourthly, we have learned an enormous amount about the need for *monitoring, evaluation and research*. When we began PEEP in 1995 we had the great benefit of a full-time researcher for the first two years, helping us to think about what we were doing, in order to do it better. We have collected a great deal of data, comparing progress from term to term. And it was clear from the start – emphasised by members of the Advisory Group – that it would be crucially important to set up a comparative study in order to be clear about what PEEP had done, and

whether – and in what ways – it had made a difference to a particular cohort of children and parents.

Undoubtedly PEEP owes a great deal to the work of Peter Hannon. Not only is PEEP's programme built around the ORIM framework, but much of the project's thinking about the monitoring, evaluation and research has been informed by the clarity of Hannon's approach to these matters. In Chapter Eight of his book 'Literacy Home and School' (1995), titled 'The Need for Evaluation and Research', Hannon elaborates on some key ideas for thinking about evaluation generally – a splendid example of the clarity which has been so helpful. They are:

- Evaluation is to do with values
- Evaluation is to help us choose between options
- Evaluation ought to concern the costs as well as the benefits
- Evaluative research is not the same as theoretical research
- Evaluation is for teachers (or, in our case, for PEEP Leaders)

Looking back, these key ideas have been helpful in setting up various strands of monitoring, evaluation and research. Even more persuasive perhaps is the opening paragraph of this chapter, which begins:

'Innovation in education ought to be accompanied by evaluation – without it, we are at the mercy of prejudice or educational fashion. Evaluating parental involvement in the teaching of literacy means identifying what forms of involvement, if any, are valuable so that they can be developed further and taken up more widely.' (p109)

In 1995, this seemed a logical, reasonable position. Now in 2000 it has become not only logical and reasonable, but absolutely fundamental to the continued existence of PEEP. A great deal of time and money has been spent, and increasingly we ask ourselves – and others ask us – the question 'Is it making a difference?' PEEP is most fortunate in having been able to set up studies which will shortly begin to provide some answers; but doing so was by no means easy. What is absolutely clear is that only with such answers could PEEP, in Hannon's words, 'be developed further and taken up more widely'.

With hindsight, it seems clear that there is not currently a *culture* of evaluation – in the broadest sense, beyond accountability – built into thinking generally about innovative work in the early years. More specifically, although there is often an *expectation* of evaluation, securing funding for it is even more problematic than for the intervention itself. And – perhaps because there has, comparatively, been so little evaluation and research in relation to learning from birth to school and associated areas – once funding *has* been secured, there is still the huge and fascinating issue of *how* to ascertain outcomes in the youngest children. This is especially problematic in relation to such

factors as self esteem and learning dispositions, which would seem to be enormously important but about which evidence is urgently needed. There is certainly evidence of increasing recognition by government, policy makers and funding agencies of the significance of the earliest years, together with a very real determination to invest in new initiatives. This represents enormous progress; but the momentum is seriously in danger of being lost unless it is matched by a similar investment in evaluation and research in the earliest years.

Last – and probably most far-reaching – has been the project's emphasis on acceptance, together with its availability to *all* families. We have tried very hard to make sure that everyone who comes into contact with PEEP feels welcomed and wanted. Although we may not be able to convince every last person that this is indeed the case, we have found that our explicit and by now almost habitual acceptance is enormously important for many people and is a really crucial factor in how PEEP works. This seems to have underpinned the growth of so many people's self-confidence; and the project's emphasis on life-long learning has developed from this aspect. It also adds to the ORIM structure as a very effective way of approaching work with parents. Adding the warmth of acceptance to opportunities to do things, to recognising and valuing progress, to interactions and to modelling has been very powerful.

Then there seem to have been at least three recurring and challenging themes which in some way or other relate to all the chapters. The first is about being clear – both amongst ourselves and with others – about *why* we are doing the things that we do. The second relates to *time* – time to plan, time to get things done, time to see the results, time to reflect. The third theme, and probably the most crucial, is about *expectations* – of ourselves, of each other, of parents and of children; and other people's expectations of *us*.

Asking and explaining why

The challenge of 'why?' goes two ways. Do we *ask* it enough – of ourselves and others? And do we *explain* enough? Young children have the cutting edge on asking 'why?' questions. But by the time we get to our age, most of us seem to have lost the knack of asking 'why?' most of the time. It may be partly that *answering* a 'why?' question is so often difficult – even threatening – and certainly requires us to think. Children learn sooner or later that many people don't much like being asked 'why?' – and as adults we know how defensive we can feel when 'put on the spot' as we call it.

We talk about partnership as fundamental to the project: with parents, other providers, researchers and of course each other. Over

the period we have realised that these partnerships work best when there are shared goals, and when people state clearly *why* they have 'signed up'. Increasingly PEEP leaders are addressing this issue of 'why?' in talking times and becoming more effective in this way. However sometimes reasons are not explored, and instead assumptions are made which can lead ultimately to suspicion, disappointment and breakdown – between adults and between children, at home, school and work.

We also talk about the importance of equal opportunities, and in working with families it is comparatively easy to see why this should be so. Experience has shown us how complex the equal opportunities issues are in relation to recruiting and managing staff. We found that we needed to move recruitment and staff management onto a more formal basis and to adopt equal opportunities in employment just as much as it had already been incorporated into the thinking about groups. We found that 'formalising' things has its own tensions between hierarchy and an open participative culture; and between applying principles and getting things done quickly. We found that increasing diversity among the staff needs proactive strategies and even then is hard. But *why* were these things so important? We found that it was not just a matter of principle, important as that undoubtedly was; but also one of practice that impacted on the outcomes of the project. We found that good management of these issues is really essential for successfully recruiting, motivating, managing and retaining staff.

There has been a growing conviction in PEEP that we tend not to ask the 'why?' questions – of ourselves or of each other – nearly enough, particularly as these are the questions that generate reflective practice. Nor, perhaps, have we explained enough – especially (in spite of best efforts) to parents – why the programme and delivery is as it is. Asking these questions of ourselves and of each other in a non-threatening way requires a level of assertiveness (in the best sense) that sometimes we do not have – or maybe have only recently acquired. Although a project like this does need some certainties (in our case for instance 'we believe parents want the best for their children' and 'self-esteem affects both the disposition and the ability to learn') above all we need a questioning kind of *culture*.

Each area of work generates an enormous range of questions – and answers – for ourselves and for others. Re-visiting the chapters, here are a few that are raised quite frequently. In Getting Started, why was the project to be for the *whole* community, rather than focusing on the families most in need? In Families, why don't we wait until three months after the birth to contact families, when it would probably be

so much easier? In Doing PEEP, why – right from the start – have we placed so much emphasis on music? And why does the programme have to be so structured? In Things PEEP Needed, why have we not made more use of video? In Premises, why is working developmentally in split-site premises so stressful for almost all concerned? In Finance, why – given the level of interest in the work so far from all quarters – is the funding position still so precarious? In People, why is equal opportunities so very important? In Collaboration, why is working together with other statutory, voluntary and private providers so difficult in practice? In Collecting Evidence, why do we say that both formative evaluation and summative research are absolutely essential? And why did we wait until 1998 to begin the longitudinal study? And perhaps a 'why?' question for this Conclusion is: why has it been hard to establish our culture of questioning, reflective practice – and what still holds it back?

Perhaps most important of all – as long as we really *are* questioning and reflecting and striving to find answers – is the knowledge that as well as needing continually to review what we *think* we know, it is also alright – indeed often inevitable – *not* to know. For most of the very complex questions, we are more and more aware that there *are* no instant, obvious or *right* answers, but rather a range of possibilities that can help to light the way forward.

Never enough time

It could be argued that the issue of finding time is simply a component in having appropriate expectations, the subject of the section that follows this one. However although that clearly *is* the case, the time factor is so all-pervasive that it seems to need a section to itself. What we have learned about time is, nevertheless, entirely straightforward: it is simply that time and again, in almost every area of the project, we have under-estimated how long things take.

At the outset this problem was compounded by a range of approaches to time management not all of which were helpful. Getting some things done certainly took longer than it might. Now as a result of five years of rapid change and high expectations all round, time management in the project is probably unusually 'good' for an organisation of this sort. But in fact, there are some grounds for concern that it is *too* good. With every minute accounted for and very little margin for the unexpected, genuine reflective practice becomes very difficult.

When we build evaluation into every new initiative, with time-scales and targets, where is the time carefully to observe, record, think about and discuss *the unexpected*? This is a particular problem with very

developmental work which by definition includes a good deal of the unexpected, and where it *is* vital to reflect on what is happening. It could be argued that a rigorous task-focus means that the times for building up our mutual trust and understanding of each other through sharing experiences and small daily events are squeezed out of the day, to the detriment of the work. We have realized that it is problematic to be trying to give to other people things that we ourselves do not have. Working under enormous time-pressure makes it very hard for PEEP Leaders to communicate to parents that genuine sense of confidence and optimism about their ability to manage 'the daily round' which parents and carers often need.

Alongside the issue of time to get the work done in a day-to-day sense is the question of time for the *consequences* of our work to develop. We have found this to be a difficult balancing act. We all want to know as soon as possible whether such expenditure of effort and money is worth it – and yet we also know that what really matters are the long-term effects, which we cannot know yet. Living with uncertainty is not easy, and yet we are learning how important it is. The alternatives are either to reassure ourselves and others by making false claims, or to write off the possibility of the most important outcomes too soon.

Again, a review of the chapter areas shows how persistent are these two time elements – time to do the work, and time to see the results. In Getting Started, the pressure to begin the work was countered by the Evaluation Team's view that more time should have been spent reviewing possibilities. In Families, there is so much more that the recruiting Home Visitors could cover if they *and* the mothers had more time to spend at this stage. In Doing PEEP, the time it takes to run a group including talking-time has always been a difficult one to resolve. In Things PEEP Needed, we seriously underestimated at the outset the time that would be needed to organise and maintain all the resources for families, and all the equipment to run the project. In Premises, so much 'wasted' time is spent every day on security procedures in order to prevent burglary, another fire, general damage – and so much time is wasted in getting from the Office to the Centre and from the Centre to the Cabins. In Finance, every funding application always takes far more time than one would think possible – and the monitoring that accompanies some of the funding, while sometimes internally helpful, is also extremely time-consuming. In People, human resources issues have taken unimaginably more time than was envisaged. In Collaboration, there has *always* been far more work in this area than we have had time for. In Collecting Evidence, the time it takes the researchers to reach many of the families in the cohorts has been more

than expected; and the time needed for some of the instruments, particularly in more complex situations, remains a challenging issue.

We know that time is elastic, and that it can be made to stretch. We also know that, as with metal, too much stretching causes elastic 'fatigue'. Images of the sudden unexpected descent of underwear to the floor are enough to remind us that the state of the elastic needs monitoring – and conserving.

Taking a look at expectations

What do I expect of you, what do you expect of me, what do they expect of us, and we of them? Are the expectations appropriate? Do we expect too much or too little – and what difference does it make? These are questions that have underpinned debates about teaching and learning for decades. They are particularly significant for a project like PEEP that develops from 'a blank sheet' and where practically every new thing is being done for the first time. How can we know what to expect of people – colleagues, parents, children? And how can others – families, colleagues in the statutory and voluntary sectors, funding agencies – know what to expect of us in this new work?

Do expectations matter? Teacher education has long since emphasised the crucial importance of 'knowing the child', and we have learned from the Russian psychologist Vygotsky that the most effective way to support learning is to concentrate on what the learner can *nearly* do – in other words, to have appropriate expectations on an incremental basis. We know that the great challenge about holding appropriate expectations of someone or something lies in basing those expectations on a really clear knowledge and understanding of existing – and potential – capabilities. This is what makes good teaching so hard, and it is what makes new work like PEEP's so hard as well. If our expectations are too high, the object of them is set up for failure – and if too low, then a different, more long-term sort of stagnation may take place.

Reading PEEP leaders' and parents' memories of joining the project and of setting up and running groups, it is very clear that consistently we underestimated the challenges that people would be undertaking to do these things. As well as time, we underestimated the confidence and commitment that it would take for people both to start, and to keep going. Our expectations of how the programme could be delivered were very high indeed – maybe sometimes too high.

All these things relate to internal expectations about *getting the work done* – but what of expected *outcomes*? Here again we found ourselves in a tangle. Our aim was to make a significant difference, in the whole community of children; this was the vision we would strive for. Two

issues immediately arose: clearly there had to be a mis-match in the short and medium term at least between our 'visionary' aim, and what we might realistically achieve. And – especially given the long-term nature of the work – over what time-scale would our success or failure be judged? People's *expectations,* based on knowledge, understanding and particular perspectives, were again the key here and could often be conflicting.

To give an example: we were *aiming* – eventually – to involve *all* children from 0 to 4, but an assessment of likely take-up in the first three years had to be made. We decided that less than 15% by 1997 would constitute definite failure, 30% would be doing well judging by the experience of other providers – and over 30 % would be cause for celebration. We had estimated a population of approximately 1,800 children. What actually happened was that in the first term of the project we had twelve families in two pilot groups, in May 1996 there were 120 children (0-3s) and in May 1997 there were 526 families. However by now we had a recruitment system at the hospital for babies which transformed our ability to reach families in order to offer them the project, with the result that slightly over 50% of babies were enrolling. While some people viewed this as an impressive increase, others naturally pointed out the shortfall between 50% and 100%. In relation to expectations it has become clear that we must be careful to make a distinction between reaching for the sky – our aims – and what we can claim to be realistic expectations over certain periods.

Finally, some of the most vivid and memorable lessons for many of us relate to the expectations we had held of the youngest children, which have so often been confounded by the evidence of our own eyes and ears in group sessions. One of the most moving experiences has been to watch one-year-olds who have been in PEEP since they were born. Barely able to walk – or in some cases still crawling – reaching the book-box, selecting the book of their choice and returning to their adult to share it. They know how to choose the book they want, how to hold it and turn the pages or persuade their adult to do so, how to have a conversation about it even without words – and above all they *want* to do these things and know that they can. Group Leaders' review sheets (well over a thousand of them each year) often show how we have underestimated the capabilities of the 0s – 4s and their parents and carers.

Parents' and carers' Diary Pages are another rich source of evidence. It may be that in documenting their activities at home and their children's resulting learning on the Diary Pages, PEEP parents are gradually putting together a considerable body of evidence that will help us to re-examine some of our assumptions about families. These

indications of the youngest children's capabilities and potential might radically alter our current understandings and expectations of children in the period from birth to school.

Children's voices?

What have we learned about PEEP's effect on children? Contributions to this book have been made mainly by adults, about adults. And yet the aim of the project relates primarily to children's development and progress. However one of the earliest things we learned was the fundamental difference between supporting early learning from birth to school, and supporting learning subsequently; and the issue was that, rather than working directly with children as many of us were accustomed to do, we were working with *adults, about* babies and very young children.

So what might these babies and very young children say about PEEP, if they could? As PEEP is about supporting adults and children together at home, what would they say about the PEEP things their parents and carers do with them there? From observation and anecdote it would appear that PEEP is having a positive effect on children, in various ways. It seems to affect their confidence and 'locus of control', their curiosity, persistence and awareness of others, their sense of identity as readers, learners, and communicators – and possibly above all their enthusiastic responses to books, songs and rhymes, and language activities. Amongst the adults engaged in PEEP there is a growing sense of anticipation and excitement about the impact of PEEP on the children whose parents and carers engage with it, and an eagerness to find out more from the research studies currently in progress.

Reaching resolutions

If we were to make a list of 'resolutions' for PEEP in Phase Two as a result of this five-year diary, we would want them to relate to what in the Introduction is referred to as the most persistent and important issue of all, the question that other practitioners wrestle with on their

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own account and about which almost everyone asks. This is the struggle to work with the 'hard-to-reach' families – or rather, the families we have not yet succeeded in reaching. Our list might look something like this:

- Ask more 'why' questions – and get better at answering them
- Allocate enough time for the things that matter
- Develop a greater awareness of expectations and their consequences
- Go on making sure everyone feels welcomed and wanted
- Make the most of stories, songs and rhymes
- Continue *offering* information and ideas

Provided that funding can be secured we shall be working on six objectives throughout Phase Two of PEEP. We plan to continue running and developing Peers PEEP; to complete the Birth to School study; to develop our work in Sure Start; to disseminate PEEP by marketing materials and training; to pilot and develop our ability to replicate PEEP in other areas; and to plan for Phase Three of Peers PEEP, to run for a generation.

In PEEP's first five years we have learned many things about working to support children's earliest learning. We have learned enough to understand that there is still so much to learn – about how young brains develop, and the relationship between early activities at home and later outcomes for children; about the impact of the PEEP programme on the confidence and competence of parents and carers, and how to engage successfully with vulnerable families in order to maximise this impact; about the impact of PEEP not only on literacy outcomes but on the mental health of children and families, and about the relationship between literacy and regeneration. On the one hand there is a great sense of progress and achievement; on the other it seems that these five years may represent a beginning. In this chapter – indeed throughout the book – we have been looking at the tip of the iceberg of all there is to know about making a difference for the youngest children and their families. The project needed to look back and reflect; in order to make sense of looking ahead and moving on.

Glossary

Bayley: The Bayley Scales of Infant Development, an instrument used clinically and for research.

Bookstart: Sainsbury's Bookstart is a national programme run in conjunction with Book Trust, the independent book charity. By making free books available to every baby in the UK, Bookstart encourages parents to look at books with their children from as early an age as possible. The Bookstart pack is presented to babies at their 7-month health check.

BBL CDI: Blackbird Leys Community Development Initiative

CEC: Community Education Centre – in the case of the Peers Centre, the East and South Oxford Adult and Community Education Centre (ESOCEC)

CEO: Chief Education Officer

DfEE: Department for Education and the Environment

EAZ: Education Action Zone

Ethics permission: all research programmes require ethics permission; PEEP's was granted by the Nursing and Allied Professions Research Ethics Committee

FEL: OUDES Families, Early Learning and Literacy Group

HMI: Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools

HV: Health Visitor

IMPACT: a visionary primary mathematics project used by teachers, involving regular maths activities for children and their parents at home

INSET: inservice training

LEA: Local Education Authority

LSA: Learning Support Assistant

NCB: National Children's Bureau

NFER: National Foundation for Educational Research

OCC: Oxfordshire County Council

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OCN: Open College Networks, a national scheme for the accreditation of adult learning which can be used flexibly for a wide range of courses; quality control is maintained by rigorous validation procedures and on-going moderation.

ORIM: the structure, developed by Peter Hannon and his team at the University of Sheffield, that underpins PEEP: a positive starting point which acknowledges and values the opportunities, recognition, interaction and modelling that all parents provide for their children in a variety of ways.

OUDES: Oxford University Department for Educational Studies

PAGE: Primary Advisory Group for English (Oxfordshire)

PEN GREEN CENTRE: a unique family centre in Corby, Northamptonshire, providing superb best practice in supporting children and families. Pen Green has developed as a research base, and its inspirational training is widely used as a resource for practitioners.

RIF: Reading Is Fundamental, a very successful literacy initiative launched by the National Literacy Trust

RSA: The Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce

SRB: Single Regeneration Budget (now The Challenge Fund)

WEA: Workers' Educational Association

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"The recruitment visit ... gave me the sense I had been needing of belonging to the community and not feeling alone."

"PEEP has given me ideas and confidence, and these have reflected on my children ..."

"One dad who works nights brought the children to PEEP instead of going to bed, because they enjoy it so much, he said."

"If it wasn't for (PEEP on) Thursday afternoons, I'd just be a doss – I'd go to pieces."

Peers Early Education Partnership (PEEP) has been running for five years, with the aim of raising educational attainment – especially in literacy – by a whole community of children, from their birth. **'PEEP Voices'** is the story of how PEEP started and what happened in those five years. It is told by many of the people most closely involved – parents and carers, staff and others. Does PEEP make a difference? What were the problems? Should there be more support for families with children from birth to school? Can this kind of work begin to address the results of isolation, disadvantage and social exclusion? This book provides evidence and reflection on which to base some answers.

The emerging issues will be relevant to policy makers, funders, project managers and advisers, trainers, community workers, volunteers and many others. Here is an insight into the opportunities and challenges inherent in working to support families with young children from birth to school.

Other publications from PEEP

The Learning Together Series:
Learning together with Babies
Learning together with Ones
Learning together with Twos
Learning together with Threes
Learning together with Fours

Making the most of PEEP (in press)
This book supports the use by practitioners of the 'Learning Together' series with parents and carers in group settings and in the home. It includes the text of the PEEP programme together with a quality framework, and sections relating to family recruitment and retention, programme delivery, interagency collaboration and resources for early language and literacy development.

Cover illustrations Juliet Breeze

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